

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā was revealed in Makkah and it has 135 Verses and 8 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

The other name of this Sūrah, according to As-Sakhawi is Sūrah Kalīm (كَلِيم) because it contains the detailed story of Kalīmullah Sayyidnā Mūsā (عَلَيْهِ السَّلَام).

It is reported in the Musnad by Dārimi on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah (رضي الله عنه) that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) said that two thousand years before Allah Ta'ālā created the sky and the earth, He recited (i.e. to the angels) Sūrahs Ṭā-Hā and Yāsīn, the angels said, "Fortunate and blessed are the people to whom these Sūrahs will be revealed, and blessed are the chests which will preserve (memorize) them, and blessed are the tongues which will recite them." And it was this very Sūrah which brought about the conversion of Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) who had actually set out fully determined to kill the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). This story has been related in all the books of *Sīrah* (Biographies of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ)).

The story as narrated by Ibn Ishāq runs as follows: One day Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) set out, with sword in hand, fully determined to kill the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). On the way Nu'aim Ibn 'Abdullāh accosted him and asked him where was he headed to. Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) replied that he was going to finish off the man who had sown discord among the Quraish, vilified their faith, seduced them from belief and disparaged their idols. Nu'aim then said "O 'Umar! You are deceiving yourself. If you kill Muḥammad (ﷺ), do you really think that his clan Banū 'Abd Munāf will spare your life? If you have any sense, better see to your own sister and her husband because they both have become Muslims and have accepted the religion of Muḥammad (ﷺ)." Sayyidnā

‘Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ was shaken by what he heard and retraced his steps towards the house of his sister and her husband. At that moment Sayyidnā Khabbāb bin ‘Arath, one of the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was teaching both of them Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā which was written on a sheet of paper.

When they realized that Sayyidnā ‘Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb ؓ was coming, Sayyidnā Khabbāb Ibn ‘Arath ؓ hid himself in another room or in some corner of the house and Sayyidnā ‘Umar's sister hid the sheet of paper under her thigh. But Sayyidnā ‘Umar had heard Sayyidnā Khabbāb Ibn Art ؓ reciting something, and he asked his sister what was it. She tried to evade the question but he would not be put off. Finally he came out in the open and told them point blank that he had just learned about them becoming Muslim and followers of Muḥammad ﷺ. Having said this, he started beating his brother-in-law Sa‘īd Ibn Zaid and when his sister Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها came to the rescue of her husband he beat her too and left her bleeding.

Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها and her husband had enough of it and they called out defiantly, "All right, you listen now! It is true that we have become Muslims and have adopted the Faith of Allah Ta‘ālā and His Prophet ﷺ. Now you do whatever you want". Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ then saw that his sister was bleeding and he felt remorse for being too rough with her. He asked her to show him the sheet of paper from which she was reading so that he could learn something about the teachings of Muḥammad ﷺ. Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ was a literate person. That is why he wanted to read the sheet of paper himself. His sister was afraid that he might either destroy or desecrate it, but he assured her on oath that he would do neither and promised to return it to her after he had read it. When she saw the way things were moving and noticed a change in his attitude, she even began to entertain the hope that he too might become a Muslim. But she told him that he was unclean and only those who were clean could touch the sheet. So Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ bathed and his sister gave him the sheet on which Sūrah Ṭā-Ḥā was written. He read the first few lines and said, "It is written in beautiful language and appears to be worthy of respect." Khabbāb Ibn ‘Arath who had remained hidden all this time, now came out and said, "O ‘Umar Ibn Khattab! Allah Ta‘ālā is very Merciful and it is my conviction that He had chosen you in response to the

ardent wishes of the Holy Prophet ﷺ whom I heard only yesterday making the following supplication to Allah Ta'ālā ^{بِأَبِي الْحَكَمِ} بن أبي الحكم ("O Allah! Strengthen Islam through Abul Ḥikam Ibn Hishām (meaning Abu Jahl) or 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb"). The intention was that the conversion of either one of these two men would lend great strength to the Muslims who were as yet very weak. Ibn Khabbāb said, "O 'Umar! This is your chance. Do not miss it". At this, Sayyidnā 'Umar Ibn Khaṭṭāb requested Khabbāb ^{رضي الله عنه} to take him to the Holy Prophet ﷺ (Qurṭubī). What followed next and how he came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam is too well known to need a repetition at this place.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 8

طه ﴿١﴾ مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى ﴿٢﴾ إِلَّا تَذِكْرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى ﴿٣﴾ تَنزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَى ﴿٤﴾ الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى ﴿٥﴾ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى ﴿٦﴾ وَإِنْ تَجْهَر بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى

﴿٨﴾

Ṭā-Hā [1] We did not reveal the Qur'ān to you to (make you) face hardship [2] rather to remind him who has the fear [3] a revelation from the One Who created the earth, and the heavens so high. [4] The Raḥmān (the All-Merciful) has positioned Himself on the Throne. [5] To Him belongs whatever there is in the heavens, whatever there is in the earth, whatever there is between them and whatever there is beneath the soil. [6]

And if you pronounce the word aloud, then (it makes no difference, for) He certainly knows the secret and what

is even more hidden. [7] (Such is) Allah. There is no god but He. For Him are the Beautiful Names. [8]

Commentary

طه (Tā-Hā) Many Commentators have assigned different meanings to this word. Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās ؓ thinks it means يا رجل (O man!) while according to Ibn ‘Umar ؓ it means يا حبيبي (O my Dear!). It is also suggested that طه and يس are the names of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. However the most obvious explanation is the one given by Sayyidnā Abū Bakr ؓ and the majority of scholars, namely that like many other isolated letters حروف مقطعه appearing at the beginning of several chapters of the Qur’ān (such as اَلَمْ), this word is also among the مُتَشَابِهَات or mysteries whose meaning is known only to Allah Ta‘ālā.

مَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى (We did not reveal the Qur’ān to you to [make you] face hardship - 20:2) The word لِتَشْقَى is derived from شقاء which means pain and distress. In the early days of Islam when the Qur’ān was first revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions used to spend whole nights in prayers and in reciting the Qur’ān, as a result of which his feet used to get swollen due to standing for long hours in the prayers. Whereas during day time he would worry himself on how to bring light to the infidels in order that they should accept the teachings of the Qur’ān. This verse seeks to lessen the burden of long hours of prayers by informing the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the Qur’ān was not revealed to inflict toil and hardship on him and that it was not expected of him to stay awake the whole night reciting the Qur’ān. Thereafter, the Holy Prophet ﷺ adopted a routine by which he rested in the early hours of the night and would get up later to offer the ṣalāh of tahajjud.

This verse also suggests that the duty of the Holy Prophet ﷺ is merely to convey the Message of Allah Ta‘ālā to the unbelievers, and thereafter he need not concern himself as to who accepted the Message and who did not.

إِلَّا تَذَكُّرُهُ لِمَنْ يَخْشَى (Rather to remind him who has the fear - 20:3). Ibn Kathīr has narrated that in the early days following the revelation of the Qur’ān while the believers spent whole nights in prayers, the infidels mocked and taunted them that the revelation of the Qur’ān brought nothing to them but hardship, allowing them no rest and peace. In this.

verse, Allah Ta'ālā says that these wretched and miserable people cannot sense that the Qur'ān and the knowledge communicated through it can bring only blessings and felicity. This fact is not appreciated by them because they are ignorant and misguided. In a Ḥadīth which has been related by Sayyidnā Mu'āwiyah ؓ the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "When Allah intends to reward a person, He gives him the correct perception of religion". (Ṣaḥīhain)

Here Imām Ibn Kathīr has recorded another authentic Ḥadīth which has been related by Ṭabarānī from Tha'labah Ibn Al-Ḥakam and which will be good news for the learned people :

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يقول الله تعالى للعلماء يوم القيامة اذا قعد على كرسيه لقضاء عبادهم: انى لم اجعل علمى وحكمتى فيكم الا وانا اريد ان اغفر لكم على ما كان منكم ولا ابالى (ابن كثير ص ١٤١ ج ٣)

The Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment when Allah will ascend His Kursiyy (Chair) to pronounce judgment on the actions of His servants He will tell the learned people that He had placed His knowledge and wisdom in their hearts for the sole reason that He wished to forgive them in spite of their failings, and that these matters were of no concern to Him."

It is evident that in this Ḥadīth the reference to learned people applies to those only who possess the fear of Allah Ta'ālā which is a sure sign of Qur'ānic knowledge.

عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى (Positioned Himself on the Throne - 20:5): About these words the truth is what the majority of the early scholars have held that the exact nature of 'Istiwa' (positioning) is not known to anybody. It is included in 'Mutashabihat' (the verses meaning of which is unknown). A Muslim has to believe that Istiwā' 'Ala-Al-'Arsh' (positioning on the Throne) is true, the nature of which must be in accordance with the high attributes of Allah, but nobody can comprehend it in this world.

وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى (And whatever is beneath the soil - 20:6). (ثرى) (soil) means wet earth which comes out after digging upto a certain depth. Human knowledge does not go beyond ثرى and what is beneath it is known only to Allah. Some years back scientists and researchers, using the latest and the most sophisticated instruments, spent considerable time and effort to pierce across the centre of the earth. According to newspaper reports they

were able to penetrate upto a depth of six miles only after which they came across a rock casing and all their efforts to bore further down failed. Scientists were able to collect data only upto six miles, while the diameter of the earth covers thousands of miles. One has to admit, therefore, that the knowledge of what is below the soil is a special attribute of Allah.

يَعْلَمُ الْسِّرَّ وَخَفَى (Knows the secret and what is even more hidden - 20:7). سِر (Sirr: Secret) means something which a man hides in his heart and which is not known to anyone else and اخفى (what is more hidden) means a thought which has not even formed in his mind and will take shape later on. Allah is fully aware of what ideas a man conceals in his heart at a particular moment and what thoughts he will entertain in the future, while the person concerned himself does not know what thoughts will come to his mind in the days to come.

Verses 9 - 16

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى ﴿٩﴾ إِذْ رَأَى نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾ فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ يُمُوسَى ﴿١١﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ﴿١٢﴾ وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى ﴿١٣﴾ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي ۖ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾ إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى ﴿١٥﴾ فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ﴿١٦﴾

And has there come to you the story of Mūsā? [9] When he saw a fire and said to his family, "Wait. I have noticed a fire. Perhaps I bring you an ember from it, or find some guidance by the fire." [10]

So when he came to it, he was called, "O Mūsā, [11] it is Me, your Lord, so remove your shoes; you are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā. [12] And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed: [13] Surely, I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish

Salāh for My remembrance. [14] Surely, the Hour has to come. I would keep it secret so that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes. [15] So the one who does not believe in it and follows his desires must not make you neglectful of it, otherwise you will perish. [16]

Commentary

هَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى (And has there come to you the story of Mūsā? - 20:9)

In the earlier verses, reference was made to the greatness of the Qur'ān and also to the reverence due to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thereafter, the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been related so that the Holy Prophet ﷺ should become fully aware of the trials and tribulations which afflict the prophets in the discharge of their missions, and which were rendered with courage and fortitude by the earlier prophets. This was to prepare the Holy Prophet ﷺ for the great mission which was entrusted to him. There is another verse which conveys the same sense:

وَكَلَّا نَقْصُصْ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُثَبِّتُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ

"And We narrate to you everything from the events of the messengers with which We strengthen your heart." (11:120)

It means that these stories are narrated to prepare you (the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and make you strong to undertake the responsibilities of the mission.

The story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which is related here begins like this. At Madyan he stayed with Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام with the understanding that he would serve the latter for a period of eight or ten years. According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, after the expiry of this period he sought the permission of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام to proceed to Egypt to see his mother and sister. He had fled earlier from Egypt fearing capture or death by the soldiers of the Pharaoh but this danger had now passed through the lapse of so many years. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام willingly gave the permission and sent him away, with his wife (who was the latter's daughter). He also gave him some money and a few articles which they might use during their journey. Since he was apprehensive of the hostility of some of the rulers in Syria, he adopted a less frequented route. It was winter season and his pregnant wife was very close to confinement. The route which he had taken was unfamiliar to him and he lost his bearings. He came out to the west, i.e. the right side of the mount of Ṭūr.

It was a dark and cold night and to add to the misery, his wife began to experience birth pangs. He tried to strike fire with flint but did not succeed. In this state of utter confusion he saw light on the Ṭūr mountain which, infact, was the Nūr (the light symbolizing the truth). So he said to his family, "I have noticed fire. I am going there to bring for you a live coal and I may also find someone who could tell me the way to Egypt." The presence of his wife on the journey is well established. According to some traditions there was a servant with him who is also addressed. Others say that there were some other companions also who were separated when they lost their way. (Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ)

فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا (So when he came to it - 20:11): means that he approached the fire which he had seen from a distance. Musnad by Ahmad, on the authority of Wahb Ibn Munabbih رحمه الله تعالى reports that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام drew near the fire he saw a very strange scene. A fire was blazing on a green tree without scorching even a leaf or a branch. On the other hand the flame added manifold to the beauty and the freshness of the tree. He stood there quite a while watching this strange sight waiting for a chance to pick up a piece of burning wood. At last he collected some dry grass and tried to light it but as soon as he pushed the grass towards the fire, it retracted. It is also related that the fire advanced towards him and he drew back in consternation. Consequently he was unable to collect any fire. And as he stood, not knowing what to do, a mysterious voice called him. This happened in a plain called Ṭuwā which was to his right side and at the foot of this mountain.

نُودَىٰ بِمُوسَىٰ اِنَّیْ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاحْلَعْ نَعْلَیْكَ (He was called, "O Mūsā, it is Me, your Lord, remove your shoes - 20:11,12). It is related in Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī and other books that the voice which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام heard appeared to come from all directions and not from any particular direction. At the same time the manner in which the voice reached his perception was most extraordinary, because it was heard not only through his ears but by the entire body. This, indeed, was a miracle! What the voice said was that the light that he saw was not fire but a particular kind of divine manifestation. And the voice said, "Surely I am your Lord". The question arises: how did Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام know that it was the voice of Allah Ta'ālā? The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā had created in his heart the conviction that the voice which he heard was

really the voice of Allah Ta'ālā. Then there was the circumstance that the fire, instead of burning the tree added to its beauty and luster. Also the manner in which the voice was perceived by all the parts of his body and not only by his ears, were all factors which left no doubt in his mind that the voice he heard was really the voice of Allah Ta'ālā.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام learned the words of Allah directly

It is mentioned in a report of Wahb mentioned in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Musnad by Aḥmad that when the mysterious voice called him "O Mūsā!", he replied, "I hear the voice O Allah! But I do not know from where it comes. Where are you, O Allah?" And Allah Ta'ālā said, "I am above you in front of you, to your right and your left. Indeed I am all around you." Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام said, "O Allah, do I hear these words from you directly or through an angel sent by You?" And Allah Ta'ālā said, "I myself am speaking to you." According to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī this proves that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام heard this كلام لفظي (spoken words) directly from Allah Ta'ālā. There is a sect among the Sunnis who believe that كلام لفظي (spoken words) can also be heard.

To take off shoes at a sacred place is an act of respect

فَاَخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ : (Remove your shoes - 20:12). The command to take off shoes was given because it was a sacred place and it was necessary to take off shoes to show it proper respect. Another reason for this command may be that since shoes are made from the hides of dead animals, they should be removed when entering upon sacred places. Sayyidnā 'Alī عليه السلام, Ḥasan al-Baṣri and Ibn Juraij رحمهم الله تعالى have supported the first explanation and reasoned that the real purpose in commanding Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to remove his shoes was that the soles of his feet should come into contact with the soil of this hallowed place and be blessed thereby. Others have said that by this command Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was required to show humility and in earlier times devout and pious believers used to take off their shoes when circumambulating around the Holy Ka'bah.

There is a Ḥadīth that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ once saw Bashīr Ibn Khaṣaṣia walking through the graves with his shoes on, said:

اِذَا كُنْتُ فِي مِثْلِ هَذَا الْمَكَانِ فَاخْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ

"When you pass by a place which needs to be respected, take off your shoes."

All the jurists are unanimous that if the shoes are clean they may be worn when offering prayers and it is established by authentic reports that the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions often wore clean shoes when saying prayers. But their common practice appears to be of removing the shoes when saying prayers, because it is closer to humility.

إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى (You are in the sacred valley of Ṭuwā - 20:12): Allah, in his Divine Wisdom, has granted special status to some selected places such as Baitullah (the Holy Ka'bah), the Aqṣā Mosque, Masjid Nabawi etc. Wādī Ṭuwā (the valley of Ṭuwā) is also one such sacred place and is situated at the foot of the mount of Ṭūr.

How to conduct oneself when the Qur'ān is being recited

فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى (So listen to what is revealed - 20:13). Sayyidnā Wahb Ibn Munabbih has said that the correct behavior while listening to the recitation of the Qur'ān is, that one sits still, refrains from any unnecessary movement in a way that no organ of his body is involved in any other work, keeps eyes down - concentrates the mind towards understanding its meaning. The person who listens to the Holy Qur'ān in this respectful manner is rewarded by Allah Ta'ālā with a better understanding of His word.

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (Surely I AM ALLAH. There is no god but I, so worship Me and establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance - 20:14): with these words Allah Ta'ālā bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام a knowledge of all the basic principles of the true Faith, namely the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā, the prophethood and the Hereafter. فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَى (So listen to what is revealed) refers to prophethood. فَاعْبُدْنِي means "worship Me alone and no one else". This points to the Oneness of Allah Ta'ālā. إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ (Surely, the Hour has to come) points to the inevitability of the Hereafter. Although the word فَاعْبُدْنِي (worship Me) encompasses the injunction for prayers also yet it has been mentioned separately to stress its special merit relative to the other forms of worship. It is the pillar of the Faith and its neglect is the mark of the infidels.

أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (Establish Ṣalāh for My remembrance - 20:14): means that the essence of prayer is the remembrance of Allah Ta'ālā and that the Ṣalāh, from beginning to end is nothing but remembering Allah - with the tongue, the heart and the other organs of the body. Therefore,

one should not neglect to remember Allah Ta'ālā while praying. This sentence also means that if a person omits to say his prayers at the appointed time due to over-sleeping or forgetfulness while engrossed in some other task, he should say his prayers as soon as he wakes up from sleep or becomes aware of his lapse. This is according to Ḥadīth.

أَكَادُ أَخْفِيهَا (I would keep it secret - 20:15): Allah Ta'ālā says that He wishes to keep the circumstances relating to the Day of Judgement hidden from all created things including prophets and angels. The word أكاد (I would) gives a subtle hint that it is only to induce people to good deeds that the coming of the Day of Judgment has been disclosed, otherwise even this fact would have been concealed.

لِنُجْزِيَ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَى : (So that everyone is given a return for the effort one makes - 20:15). If this phrase is taken to be linked with the word آتِيَة (has to come) then it would mean that this world is not a place of requital. Here a person does not receive recompense according to his merits and even if he receives some reward in this world it is just a token which does not constitute the full recompense of his deeds. It is, therefore, essential that there should be a time when everybody would receive his due reward.

Another possibility about the construction of this phrase is that it is taken to be linked with the words أَكَادُ أَخْفِيهَا (I would keep it secret - 20:15). In this case, it would mean that the philosophy in not revealing the time of death and the Day of Judgment is that people should continue in their endeavours and should not cease to strive in the belief that their own death or the Day of Judgment are still far away in the future. (Rūḥ)

فَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْهَا (must not make you neglectful of it - 20:16) Here Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) is cautioned by Allah Ta'ālā lest he should allow himself to be led away by the infidels and become negligent about the Day of Judgment because that would be the cause of his ruination. It is clear that a Prophet and a Messenger who is impeccable cannot commit such a lapse but the fact that such a warning has been addressed to him is meant to warn his followers as well as mankind at large to be cautious in the matter.

Verses 17 - 24

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يُمُوسَى ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ ۚ أَتَوَكَّوْا عَلَيَّهَا
وَأَهْشُ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي وَلِيَ فِيهَا مَآرِبُ أُخْرَى ﴿١٨﴾ قَالَ أَلْقُهَا
يُمُوسَى ﴿١٩﴾ فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا
تَخَفْ ۚ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَى ﴿٢١﴾ وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى
جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجْ بَيضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ آيَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٢٢﴾ لِنُرِيكَ مِنْ
آيَاتِنَا الْكُبْرَى ﴿٢٣﴾ اذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٢٤﴾

And what is that in your right hand, O Mūsā?" [17] He said, "It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep, and for me it has many other uses." [18] He said, "Throw it down O Mūsā". [19] So, he threw it down, and suddenly it was a snake, running. [20] He said, "Pick it up and be not scared. We shall restore it to its former state. [21] And put your hand under your arm and it will come out white, without any disease as another sign, [22] so that We may show you some of Our great signs. [23] Go to the Pharaoh. He has really transgressed." [24]

Commentary

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يُمُوسَى The question: "What is in your right hand, O Mūsā"? - 20:17 marks the beginning of the special favour which Allah Ta'ālā showed towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in order to dispel the fear created by the unusual sights that he had seen and the Divine Word that he had heard. The style in which Allah Ta'ālā addressed him was friendly, inquiring from him what he held in his hand. Besides there was a subtle purpose in the question, namely to make him aware that what he held in his hand was a staff made of wood and nothing more. And when he had satisfied himself again that it was indeed a wooden staff, then the miracle of turning it into a serpent was revealed, thus precluding any doubt in his mind that in the darkness of the night he might have picked up a serpent instead of his staff.

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ (He said, "It is my staff" - 20:18). The simple question which

was put to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام i.e. "What is in your hand?" called for an equally brief answer, such as, "It is a staff". But he volunteered additional information which was outside the scope of the question put to him. First, he said that the staff belonged to him; second, that it served him many purposes, namely that he often reclined on it, and also beat down leaves from trees for his goats; third, that he put it to many other uses. This long and detailed reply is a perfect combination of extreme love and adoration on the one hand and profound reverence on the other. It is a natural human instinct that when a person finds the object of his adoration to be kind and attentive, he wishes to prolong the conversation in order to get the best advantage. At the same time the dictates of extreme respect require that the conversation should remain within proper limits and not become too lengthy. For this reason he ended his reply with a brief statement وَلِي فِيهَا مَارِبٌ أُخْرَى i.e. "And for me it has many other uses", but he did not give any detail of those "other uses". (Rūḥ and Maḥzarī)

From this verse Qurtubī has deduced in his Tafsīr that when needed, it is permissible, while answering a question, to include matters which are not specifically covered in the question.

Rule

This verse also shows that carrying a staff is a practice followed by the prophets. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also used to carry a staff in his hand and this practice has numerous religious as well as mundane advantages.

فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى (And suddenly it was a snake running - 20:20): When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, in obedience to the command of Allah Ta'ālā, cast down his staff it turned into a serpent. The Qur'ān has described this serpent at one place as كَانَتْهَا جَانٌّ (28:31). The word جَانٌّ means a small and slim snake. At another place it has been referred to as فَإِذَا هِيَ تُعْبَانٌ (26:32). The word تُعْبَانٌ means a long and thick snake. The word حَيَّةٌ occurring in this verse is a generic name used for snakes of all sizes and thickness. These different words can be reconciled by the fact that this serpent was slim and small in the beginning and grew later on in size and thickness. Or that this serpent was originally long and thick and has been called جَانٌّ by reason of its fast speed because as a general rule big and thick snakes are slow moving. The word كَانَتْهَا used in this verse, which means "as if" also points to the fact that it has been compared to جَانٌّ on account of its swift movements. (Maḥzarī)

وَاضْمُمْ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ (And put your hand under your arm - 20:22). The word جَنَاح means fore-limb of an animal or wing of a bird. Here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was commanded to press his hand under his armpit so that when he brings it out it will shine as brilliantly as the sun, and this will be the second miracle granted to him. This is the meaning given to the words by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه (Mazharī).

إِذْهَبْ إِلَى فِرْعَوْنَ (Go to the Pharaoh - 20:24). Having suitably armed him with two great miracles, Allah Ta'ālā commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to proceed to Egypt and invite the Pharaoh to accept the true faith because he had exceeded all bounds in his tyranny and misdeeds.

Verses 25 - 36

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾ وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِي زَوْجًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٧﴾ يَقْفَهُوا قَوْلِي ﴿٢٨﴾ وَاجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي ﴿٢٩﴾ هَارُونَ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾ اشْدُدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي ﴿٣١﴾ وَاشْرِكْهُ فِيَّ أَمْرِي ﴿٣٢﴾ كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾ وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾ إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾ قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَمُوسَى ﴿٣٦﴾

He said, "My Lord, put my heart at peace for me [25] and make my task easy for me [26] and remove the knot from my tongue, [27] that they may understand my speech. [28] And make for me an assistant from my own family: [29] Hārūn, my brother. [30] Enhance with him my strength, [31] and make him share my task, [32] so that we proclaim Your purity a lot [33] and remember You a lot. [34] You are certainly watchful over us." [35]

He said, "You have been granted your request O Mūsā. [36]

Commentary

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام received the high honour of conversing with Allah Ta'ālā and was granted the mission of prophethood, then, instead of relying on his own self and on his own ability, he turned to Allah Ta'ālā and sought His help in the discharge of his duties without

which it would be impossible for him to endure and persevere in the face of the trials and tribulations inherent in the performance of his mission. He, therefore, prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to grant him five favours.

The first prayer was *إِشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي* (Put my heart at peace for me - 20:25). Meaning to expand the ability of his heart to enable him to receive all the knowledge and wisdom of prophethood, and at the same time to bear with equanimity the slander of those people who will oppose him in his mission.

His second prayer was *وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي* (make my task easy for me - 20:26). Having been granted prophethood he realized that it is not the human ability and skill or other apparent causes which make affairs easy or difficult. In reality, things become easy or difficult as Allah Ta'ālā wills. In the *ḥadīth* the believers have been advised to seek Allah Ta'ālā's help in their affairs with the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ الطُّفْ بِنَافِي تَيْسِيرِ كُلِّ عَسِيرٍ فَإِنَّ تَيْسِيرَ كُلِّ عَسِيرٍ عَلَيْكَ يَسِيرٌ

O Allah! Be kind to us and make our difficult tasks easy because it is easy for you to make every difficult thing easy.

The third prayer was *وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي* (And remove the knot from my tongue, that they may understand my speech - 20:27, 28). The story behind this "knot" is that as an infant Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام lived with his own mother who used to suckle him and was paid for her services by the Pharaoh. When he was weaned, the Pharaoh and his wife 'Āsiya adopted him, and took him away from his mother. One day Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام caught hold of the Pharaoh's beard and slapped him on the face. Another version has it that he was playing with a stick and with it he struck the Pharaoh on his head. The Pharaoh was enraged and made up his mind to put him to death. His wife 'Āsiya tried to pacify him and said, "O King! Why do you take this matter so seriously? After all he is merely a child who does not understand things. You can test him if you like and you will find that he cannot distinguish between good things and bad things".

Thereupon, the Pharaoh ordered two trays to be brought. One was filled with live coal and the other with jewellery. It was expected that the child would be attracted by the brightness of the burning coal and reach for it because children are not normally drawn towards jewellery which is not as bright. This would have convinced the Pharaoh that what Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did was nothing more than the act of an innocent

child. But Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was no ordinary child. Allah Ta'ālā had chosen him to be a prophet whose instincts were unusual from the very moment of his birth. He put forth his hand to reach out for the jewellery instead of the coal, but Jibra'il عليه السلام turned his hand away and placed it in the tray containing coal. He picked up a piece of burning coal and put it in his mouth and so burned his tongue. The Pharaoh was thus fully satisfied that the action of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was not due to mischief but the result of a child's inability to distinguish between good and bad for himself. This incident caused an impediment in his speech which has been called عقده (knot) in the Qur'an, and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to make loose this knot. (Mazharī and Qurṭubī)

The first two prayers are of a general nature and sought Allah Ta'ālā's help in all matters. The third prayer is for the removal of a disability because eloquence and fluency of expression are essential elements in the successful conduct of prophetic mission. In a subsequent verse Allah Ta'ālā informed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that all his prayers had been granted which would suggest that he was cured of his disability. However, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his prayer to make Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام his partner in the prophethood also said هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا (He is more fluent in his tongue than me - 28:34) which would indicate that his speech's impediment was not fully cured and that the stammer persisted, though in a milder form. One of the defects which the Pharaoh found in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was that لَا يَكْذِبُ بَيِّنًا (he cannot express himself clearly - 43:52). Some people have argued that in his prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to loose the knot of his tongue only to the extent that others could understand his words. To that extent his stammer was cured but a trace of it still remained, which is not inconsistent with the grant of his prayer.

The fourth prayer was وَاجْعَلْ لِّي وَزِيرًا مِّنْ أَهْلِي (and make for me an assistant from my own family - 20:29). The first three prayers of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام concerned his own person. This fourth prayer relates to the assembling of means which would facilitate the successful completion of his mission, and the most important among these was the appointment of a deputy or a helper, who would assist him in this task. The literal meaning of the word وزير is "one who carries a burden", and since a minister of a state carries the burden of responsibilities entrusted to him

by the ruler, he is called a minister (وزير). This shows the extreme foresight and prudence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام because the success of any movement or enterprise depends on the selection of competent and dedicated supporters. With good and loyal workers it is easy to surmount all obstacles and hurdles, while with irresponsible and indifferent workers the best preparations and arrangements become futile. If one were to examine the causes of the decline of some of the modern states and the evils from which they suffer, they can all be attributed to the irresponsible conduct, mismanagement and incompetence of the ministers and advisers. It is related from the Holy Prophet ﷺ that when Allah Ṭā'ālā appoints someone to govern a country and wishes that the country should be well administered, He provides the ruler with a good Wazīr to assist him in whatever he does, and if he forgets to attend to some important task, the Wazīr is quick to remind him and to help him in what he intends to do. (Nisā'ī, from Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad).

In this prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has specified that the helper he wants should be from his own family, the reason being that the behavior and conduct of a member of the family is well-known. Besides, there is mutual affection and understanding between the members of the family which greatly helps towards the accomplishment of the mission. But it is essential that the person selected should be competent and in possession of the merit necessary for the performance of his duties so that his selection may not be attributed to nepotism and favouritism. Nowadays when there is a scarcity of people of integrity and dedication, the ruler who appoints his own close relatives to be his Wazīr and deputies renders himself liable to public criticism. When, however, the standards of probity and integrity are high, such appointments are considered normal and are, in fact, conducive to the more efficient performance of sensitive assignments. Indeed all the four Khulafā' ar-Rāshidīn (guided Caliphs) who succeeded the Holy Prophet ﷺ were in some way related to him.

In his prayer Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام first asked that the helper he required should be from his own family and then specifically asked for his brother Hārūn to be his Wazīr so that with the latter's support and assistance he could better perform the duties of his prophetic mission.

Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام was three or four years senior to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and died three years before the latter. When Sayyidnā Mūsā

ﷺ petitioned to Allah Ta'ālā for his appointment as Wazīr he was in Egypt, and there he received, through an angel, information about his elevation to the status of a prophet and his appointment as an assistant to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ. He was also instructed to receive Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ outside Egypt when he arrived there in pursuance of his mission to persuade the Pharaoh to accept the true faith. This he did.

وَأَشْرِكُهُ فِي أَمْرِی (and make him share my task - 20:32): Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ had the power to appoint Sayyidnā Harūn ﷺ as his Wazīr on his own, but he petitioned to Allah Ta'ālā to confer the appointment on his brother in order to seek His grace. Besides, he wanted him to share his prophethood and his mission and this power does not rest in any Prophet. Therefore he specially prayed to Allah Ta'ālā to make him a partner in his mission.

Good companions are a help in the better performance of worship and Dhikr (remembrance)

كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا وَنَذْكُرَكَ كَثِيرًا (So that we proclaim Your purity a lot and remember You a lot - 20:33,34). The advantage of making Sayyidnā Harūn ﷺ a Wazīr and a partner in prophethood would be that both of them together would be able to pray to Allah Ta'ālā and glorify His name more often. Here the question may arise that a man by himself can also pray as often as he desires, so where was the need for a companion? The answer to this is that good companions and a conducive environment definitely contribute towards the better performance of worship and Dhikr. A person whose friends are negligent about Allah cannot devote himself to His worship with the same quality and quantity as the person who is fortunate to have the company of pious men and righteous friends devoted to Allah's worship and Dhikr.

Here Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ ended his petition, and he was rewarded with the good news that Allah Ta'ālā, the Almighty, had granted all his requests قَدْ أُوتِيَ سَوْلكَ بِمُوسَى (you have been granted your request O Mūsā - 20:36).

Verses 37 - 44

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَىكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى ﴿٣٧﴾ إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ

﴿٣٨﴾ أَنْ أَقْدَ فِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَأَقْدَ فِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيُلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ
 بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ عَدُوٌّ لِي وَعَدُوٌّ لَهُ ۖ وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةٌ مِّنِّي ۚ
 وَلِتُصْنَعَ عَلَى عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾ إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَتَقُولُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى
 مَن يَكْفُلُهُ ۖ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَى أُمِّكَ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۖ وَكَلَّمْتُ
 نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا ۚ فَلَبِثْتَ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ
 مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَى قَدَرٍ يُّمُوسَى ﴿٤٠﴾ وَأَصْطَنَعْتُكَ لِنَفْسِي ﴿٤١﴾
 إِذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾ إِذْ هَبَا إِلَى
 فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَى ﴿٤٣﴾ فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لِّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى
 ﴿٤٤﴾

And We have bestowed Our favour on you once more, [37] when We revealed to your mother what was to be revealed, [38] that is, "Put him (the baby) in the chest, then cast it into the river, then let the river throw it by the shore and it will be picked up by one who is enemy to Me and enemy to him". And I have cast love on you from Myself, and that you are fashioned under My eye. [39] (Remember) when your sister was going (to the family of the Pharaoh) and was saying, "Shall I point you to one who nurses him?" Thus We brought you back to your mother, so that her eyes might be cooled and she does not grieve. And you had killed a person, then We brought you out of the trouble; and We tested you with a great ordeal. Then you lived a number of years amidst the people of Madyan. After all this, you came O Mūsā, to a point, destined. [40] And I have fashioned you for Myself. [41] Go, you and your brother, with My signs, and do not be slack in My remembrance. [42] Go, both of you, to the Pharaoh; he has indeed transgressed. [43] So speak to him in soft words. May be, he takes to the advice or fears (Allah)". [44]

Commentary

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَى (And We have bestowed Our favour on you once

more - 20:37). Having bestowed His gifts and special favours on Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام such as the honour of conversation with Allah, the grant of prophethood and miracles etc. Allah Ta'ālā reminds him of the benefits and favours which He had showered on him throughout his life - from his birth uptill that time and how He had saved his life from numerous risks and hazards. In relation to time, these benefits (which will be discussed in the following pages) pertain to an earlier period.

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ (When We revealed to your mother what was to be revealed - 20:38) It means that the information given to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was about a matter which could be learnt only through Divine revelation. This was that the Pharaoh's soldiers had orders to put to death all the male children belonging to the tribe of Banī Isrā'īl. She was told by means of a revelation that in order to save the life of her son she should put him in a box and float it down the river. She was re-assured not to entertain any apprehensions about his safety because Allah Ta'ālā would protect him and also return him to her. These are things which cannot be learnt by conjecture or guess work. The promise of Allah Ta'ālā, and the divine scheme to save his life are beyond human conception and can be made known through Divine revelation only.

Can a Revelation be sent to a person who is not a Prophet?

The truth of the matter is that the literal meaning of the word وَحَى (Waḥy) is a secret message which can be understood only by the person to whom it is addressed and by no one else. According to this literal sense, the word وَحَى (Waḥy) is not restricted to the prophets only and it can be used for people at large and even to animals. In the verse أَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ (16:68) the word has been used in its literal and general sense, i.e. instructing the bees by means of وَحَى Waḥy. Similarly in this verse أَوْحَيْنَا (20:38) the word has been used in its general meaning and this does not necessarily mean that she was a prophet. Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام also received Divine messages though the scholars unanimously hold the view that she was not a prophet. The Waḥy of this type is made by means of a Divine inspiration (Ilhām إلهام). Allah Ta'ālā puts an idea into someone's heart and then confirms him in the belief that it is from Allah Ta'ālā. Saints and other devout people receive such inspirations. Abū Ḥayyān and some other scholars hold that sometimes such inspirations

can be made through angels as happened to Sayyidah Maryam عليها السلام when Jibra'il عليه السلام appeared before her in the form of a human being and conveyed to her the will of Allah Ta'ālā. These inspirations (Ilhām: الإلهام), however, are specific to the person to whom they are made and are not meant for public or to be used for the propagation of the True Faith, whereas the Waḥy which is revealed to the prophets aims at appointing someone to reform people and enjoining upon him to invite people to the True Faith. It is the duty of such a person not only to have complete faith in His Waḥy himself, but also to bind others to accept his prophethood and the Waḥy and to pronounce as infidels those who deny him.

This is the difference between وحى الهام (Waḥy in the sense of Ilhām) or literal وحى نبوت (the *waḥy* of a prophet) or technical Waḥy. Literal Waḥy has always been there and will be there for ever, whereas the prophethood and (Waḥy of a prophet) have ceased with the Holy Prophet ﷺ, who was the last Prophet. Some respected scholars have given them the names of وحى تشريعى (legislative Waḥy) and وحى غير تشريعى (non-legislative Waḥy). The false prophet of Qadiyan has used these definitions and certain writings of Sheikh Muhiyy-uddin Ibn 'Arabi in support of his claim to prophethood. His arguments, however, are contrary to what Ibn 'Arabi himself has written. A detailed discussion of this question will be found in my book ختم نبوت (Khatme Nabuwat).

The name of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

In Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī her name is given as Yuhanadh (يُوْحَانَد) and in Itqān it is said that her name was Liḥyāna daughter of Yaṣmad Ibn Lawī (لحيانه بنت يصد بن لاوى). Others say her name was Bārkhā (بَارْخَا) and still others that it was Bazakht (بازخت). Some people who dispense charms and amulets attribute strange properties to her name but according to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī there is no basis for such a belief and probably it is nothing more than a hoax to entice innocent and ignorant people.

فَلْيَلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ (Then let the river throw it by the shore - 20:39.). The word يَم (Yamm) means river and here it refers most probably to the river Nile. In this verse the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been commanded by Allah Ta'ālā to place the baby in a box and set him afloat in the river Nile. Simultaneously the river has been commanded to cast the box on its bank. But the question arises as to how a river can be commanded to do something while it has no sense or understanding.

Some scholars have answered this query with the argument that although here the word has been used in the imperative mood which implies a command, it is not really a command but is meant to convey the information that the river would cast the box on its bank. However some scholars have disputed this explanation and have claimed that the word is really a command and is addressed to the river Nile because everything that Allah Ta'ālā has created possesses emotions and a sense of feeling and it is these properties, which according to the Qur'ān, enable even trees and rocks to glorify the name of Allah Ta'ālā. It is, nevertheless, a fact that except the human beings, the Jinns, and the angels no other created thing possesses feelings and emotions to a degree where the precepts of Ḥalāl (permissible) and Ḥarām (forbidden) can be made binding on them. Maulānā Rūmī رحمه الله تعالى has expressed the same idea in the following verse:-

خاک و باد و آب و آتش بنده اند ☆ با من و تو مرده با حق زنده اند

(Earth, wind, water and fire are all servants of Allah. To me and you they appear lifeless, but Allah knows that they too have life.)

يَا خُذْهُ عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوْلَهُ (And it will be picked up by one who is enemy to Me and enemy to him - 20:39.). It means that a person who is an enemy of Allah Ta'ālā and also the enemy of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام will rescue the child. Here the reference is to the Pharaoh who was the enemy of Allah Ta'ālā because of his infidelity, but his enmity towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام needs some explanation since at that time he cherished no hostility towards the latter, rather he was incurring considerable expenditure on his upbringing. Perhaps it was due to his future enmity towards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which was even at that time in the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Or again it is possible that even at that time he was the enemy and had reluctantly agreed to bring up Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the sake of his wife 'Āsiya. Yet when he felt the slightest suspicion about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he ordered his immediate execution and was prevented from carrying out his intention through the wise role of Sayyidah 'Āsiya. (Rūḥ and Mazhari)

وَأَلْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي (And I have cast love on you from Myself - 20:39). The word "love" in this verse is in the sense of 'being loved', meaning thereby that Allah Ta'ālā has bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام an

attribute that will make people show love towards him. This is the interpretation given to this verse by Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās and ‘Ikrimah رضي الله عنه. (Maḏharī)

وَلْيُصَنَّ عَلَى عَيْنِي (And that you are fashioned under My eye - 20:39). The word صَنَّ here means "good upbringing". The Arabs have a common phrase صَنَّتُ فَرَسِي (I trained my horse well). عَلَى عَيْنِي, is used in the same sense as عَلَى حِفْظِي i.e. it was Allah Ta‘ālā’s will that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام should be brought up under His own eye, and for this purpose He chose the Pharaoh, the supreme authority in Egypt, to bring up Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his own palace, unaware all the time that the child that he was raising was his enemy. (Maḏharī)

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ (When your sister was going - 20:40). The story of the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام following the box along the river and the subsequent events are alluded to in this verse, which ends with the words وَفْتَنَّا قُوتًا (We tested you with a great ordeal - 20:40). According to Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه these words mean "We tried you repeatedly", while Ḍaḥḥāk رحمه الله تعالى has translated them as "We subjected you to severe trials". Full details of this story have been given in a long Ḥadīth reported by Imām an-Nisā’ī رحمه الله تعالى in his book on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه. This story is as follows:

Detailed Story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

In Kitāb-ut-Tafsīr of his Sunan, Imām Nisā’ī رحمه الله تعالى has reported a long Ḥadīth known as (Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn) (Ḥadīth of the trials) on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه. Ibn Kathīr has also reproduced the whole of it in his commentary and then has added that Sayyidnā Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه thought that it was مرفوع (Marfū‘), in other words, it was a statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has confirmed this view with the words: وَصَدَّقَ ذَلِكَ عِنْدِي (I too believe that this Ḥadīth is مرفوع), and also gave reason in support of his opinion. However, he has admitted that the version of this story given by Ibn Jabīr and Ibn Abī Ḥatīm رحمه الله تعالى is the statement of Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه, and not of the Holy Prophet ﷺ while it contains some parts which were stated by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. It appears that Ibn ‘Abbās رضي الله عنه has learnt this story from Ka‘b al-Aḥbār as has happened in many other cases. Be that as it may, the critics like Imām Nisā’ī and Ibn Kathīr رحمه الله تعالى hold it to be marfū‘ (statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) and even those who do not accept it as such have never

challenged its contents, while a major part of this story is also mentioned in the Holy Qur'an itself. Therefore, we would like to give full translation of this Ḥadīth which has many beneficial points having academic and practical value. Imām Nisā'ī رحمه الله تعالى has related this story which he learnt from Sa'id bin Jubair ؓ that he (Sa'id Ibn Jubair ؓ) asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؓ to explain to him the meaning of the expression **وَقَسَّكَ قُورًا** , specially the word **قُورًا** which occurs in the verse relating to Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. Ibn 'Abbās ؓ said it was a long story which he would tell him (Sa'id Ibn Jubair ؓ) if he comes to him early the next morning. This he did and Ibn 'Abbās ؓ told him the story which runs as follows:

One day the Pharaoh and his companions were talking about Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ and the promise which Allah Ta'ālā had made to him to raise prophets and Kings from his progeny. Some of those present said that the Banī Isrā'īl were indeed expecting the birth of a prophet in their community and were in no doubt that Allah Ta'ālā's promise would be fulfilled. In the beginning they thought that Sayyidnā Yūsuf ؑ was the prophet promised by Allah Ta'ālā but when he died they said he was not the prophet promised to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm ؑ and that there must surely come another prophet whose arrival would fulfill Allah Ta'ālā's promise. This information upset the Pharaoh who feared that if ever a prophet was born in the Isrā'īli community, whom he held in bondage, he (the prophet) would try to liberate them from their servitude. He, therefore, asked his friends to advise him how such a catastrophe could be avoided. After much deliberation they came to the unanimous conclusion that the only way to meet this contingency was to put to death every male child born in an Isrā'īli family. In pursuance of this decision, armed soldiers were sent out with orders to search every Isrā'īli house and kill all male children.

This blood-shed continued for some time but then the Egyptians realized that all their work was done and arduous duties performed by the Banī Isrā'īl and if the process of killing their male children continued then a time would come when, their old men having died a natural death, no young men would be left to serve them, and they themselves would have to perform all the hard and toilsome work. In order to overcome this problem they came up with another proposal according to which all male

children born in one year should be put to death while all those born in the following year should be spared. Such a device would ensure the availability of a continuous supply of labour force of young Isrā'īlis who could replace the older men, yet at the same time their number would not be large enough to pose a threat to the Pharaoh's authority. Everybody approved of this proposal and a law was passed for its implementation. (And now the wisdom and power of Allah Ta'ālā demonstrated itself in the following way). Sayyidnā Mūsā's ﷺ mother gave birth to Sayyidnā Ḥārūn ﷺ in the year when, according to the law of the Pharaoh, male Isrā'īli children were spared and there was no danger to his life. But when Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was conceived, his birth was expected in the year when the Pharaoh's decree required that all male Isrā'īli children be put to death. His mother was, therefore, greatly distressed at the thought of losing her son after its birth.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ paused in his story and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the first test (فتن) to which Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was put in that his life was at risk even before he was born."

Then Allah Ta'ālā, by means of وحى الهام (Divine inspiration) told the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ to set her mind at rest.

لَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكَ وَجَا عِلُّوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ

Do not fear and do not grieve, surely We are going to bring him back to you and appoint him one of (Our) messengers - 28:7.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was born Allah Ta'ālā commanded his mother to put him in a box and float him down the river Nile, which she did. After she had completed this task the Satan tried to perplex her with the suggestion that she had made a mistake by floating her son down the river because even if he had been put to death by the order of the Pharaoh she would at least have had the satisfaction of burying him with her own hands. Now there is no hope for him and he would probably be eaten up by the river animals. While the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ was greatly worried at what the Satan had told her, the waves cast the box upon a rock where the Pharaoh's slave girls used to come for bathing and washing. When they saw the box they wanted to open it, but one of them said that if the box contained some valuable articles and they opened it, then the Pharaoh's wife would suspect that they had kept back

some of these for themselves and nothing that they could say would satisfy her. Accordingly, they brought the box unopened to the Pharaoh's wife.

When the Pharaoh's wife opened the box she found a boy and she instinctively felt a sudden surge of love for him - something which she had never experienced before. This was just as Allah Ta'ālā had told him (وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي) : And I have cast love on you from Myself). On the other hand, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام), in a state of puzzle caused by the Satan forgot the promise made to her by Allah Ta'ālā and was so overwhelmed by grief that all happiness forsook her heart leaving it an empty shell. وَأَصْبَحَ قُودًا أُمِّ مُوسَى فَارِغًا (And the heart of the mother of Mūsā became restless - 28:10). At the same time the Pharaoh's soldiers learnt about the presence of an Isrā'īli boy in the palace and they rushed with knives in their hands, and asked the Pharaoh's wife to surrender the boy so that they could put him to death.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) paused again and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the second test (فَتْنٌ) to which Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) was exposed."

The Pharaoh's wife remonstrated with the soldiers. "What?" She said, "Do you think this small and frail baby, if allowed to live, can ever increase the strength of Banī Isrā'īl? You wait here and I will go to the Pharaoh and plead for his life. I hope the Pharaoh will spare his life. If not, then I will not stand in your way and you can take him." Saying so, she went to the Pharaoh and said to him, "This child is the joy of my heart and yours also." The Pharaoh replied, "Yes, I know that he is the joy of your heart, but as for me, I do not need him."

At this point of the story Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās (رضي الله عنه) quoted the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) as saying, "I swear by Allah that if on that occasion the Pharaoh had also admitted to Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) being the joy of his heart, as his wife did, Allah Ta'ālā would have guided him along the path of the True Faith as He guided his wife."

(However, on account of his wife's urgent pleas the Pharaoh spared the life of the child). Now she needed a woman to nurse him. Many women offered their services but he would not suck from any of them

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاصِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ (And We had already barred him (Mūsā) from (accepting) any suckling woman - 28:12). The Pharaoh's wife was in a real predicament. How will the child live if he was not nursed? She sent him with her servants to the market place to find any woman whose milk he would draw.

While these events were taking place in the Pharaoh's palace, the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was concerned by anguish at the fate of her son. She asked her daughter to go out and make inquiries about the box and the child that whether he was still alive or was he eaten up by the river animals. The promise which Allah had made to her when she was pregnant that he would protect her child and return him to her after a brief separation had completely escaped her memory. And then a miracle happened. As soon as the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came to the market place she met the Pharaoh's female servants who held Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in their arms and were looking for a woman who could nurse him. She also noticed that the child would not accept milk from any woman which caused them great anxiety and distress. So she said to them, "I can take you to a family where there is a woman whose milk, I hope, the child will accept and who will bring him up with great love and affection." Thereupon the servants held her on the suspicion that she was, perhaps, the mother or a close relation of the child and for that reason spoke with such a confidence that the proposed family is well-wisher of and sympathetic to this child.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه stopped and told Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه that this was the third test (تَرْكِبٌ) (for the sister of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was naturally frightened at being held like that but she kept her pose and told the servants that when she said that the family would love the child and serve him with devotion what she meant was that they would do so in the hope of getting access to the Pharaoh's court and thus obtaining some material benefit for themselves. This explanation satisfied the servants and they released her. She hurried back home and informed her mother of what had happened. Then both of them went to the market place where the servants stood with the baby. The mother took him in her arms and put him to her breast, and he sucked greedily until he was satiated. The Pharaoh's wife was overjoyed when she was informed that at last a woman had been found whose milk the child would take and ordered her

to be brought to her. On arrival the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام sensed that the Pharaoh's wife needed her and her services badly. At the same time she remembered Allah's promise to her that her son would be re-united to her after a brief separation. So she decided that she would offer her services on her own terms. The Pharaoh's wife told her that she was extremely fond of the child and could not bear parting from him for a moment. Therefore she should come and live in the palace and nurse the child. But Sayyidnā Mūsā's mother declined to do so. She said she had a child of her own who too had to be nursed and fed and therefore it was not possible for her to leave her home. However, if the child was entrusted to her care she would keep him with her and nurse him. She assured the Pharaoh's wife that if she agreed to her proposal no effort shall be wanting on her part to give him the best care and attention. There was no choice for the Pharaoh's wife and she accepted this arrangement. Thus the child was, re-united to his mother and Allah's promise to her was fulfilled.

After some time when Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام grew comparatively stronger, the Pharaoh's wife asked the mother of Mūsā عليه السلام to bring the child to her so that she may see him (as she was longing for him). She also told all the courtiers that the child was coming to their home and they must show him due respect and offer him gifts. She warned them that she would watch what they would do with the child. So when Mūsā عليه السلام came out with his mother from her home, he was showered with gifts and presents right from that moment. The Pharaoh's wife was delighted to see him and gave him many expensive presents on her own and delivered all these presents to the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. She then took him to the Pharaoh hoping that he too would give him presents. The Pharaoh took the child in his arms who suddenly clutched at his beard and pulled it causing his head to bow down. The courtiers were horrified and said to the Pharaoh: "We warned you about the promise of Allah to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام that a prophet will be born in the tribe of Banī Isrā'īl who will inherit your Kingdom and your wealth and will defeat and overthrow you. You have seen with your own eyes the first signs of the fulfillment of Allah's promise". The Pharaoh took the warning and ordered his soldiers to put the child to death.

Here Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه stopped again in his narration and

said, "O Ibn Jubair ﷺ ! This is the fourth test (فنون) for Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ where death seemed so near".

The Pharaoh's wife at once came to the child's rescue and addressed her husband thus, "You have given this child to me. He is all mine. So what is all this fuss about?" The Pharaoh said, "Can't you see that by his action this child is warning me that one day he would overthrow me and deprive me of my Kingdom?" His wife replied, "I know a sure means of ascertaining whether his action was the action of an uninformed and innocent child or he deliberately intended to defy and challenge your authority. You order a servant to bring two trays. Put two live coals in one and two shining pearls in the other and place both the trays in front of the child. If he picks up the coal, that would be proof enough that he is totally unaware of the consequences of his action because nobody with any sense would put his hand in fire." The Pharaoh agreed to this test and when the two trays were placed before Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ he picked up the coal. (However there is another tradition that he wanted to reach for the pearls but Jibra'īl ﷺ guided his hand and placed it on the coal). When the Pharaoh saw this he snatched away the coal from the child's hand to save him from harm. Thus the Pharaoh's wife was proved right. She turned to him and said, "O King! Now you know the truth." Thus Allah once again saved his life because He had chosen him for a very special mission.

(And so Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ continued to enjoy the favours of the Pharaoh and the great love of his mother until he grew to full manhood). Knowing in what esteem the royal family held him, the people of the Pharaoh did not dare to insult and torment Banī Isrā'īl as they used to do previously. One day he was out for a stroll in the city when he came across two persons who were quarrelling over some matter. One of them was a man of the Pharaoh and the other was an Isrā'īli. The latter called out to Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ to help him. Mūsā ﷺ got very angry at the Pharaoh's man. How dare he bully an Isrā'īli in his presence knowing that he held a place of honour in the royal court, and also that he was full of sympathy for the Isrā'īlies (on account of the harsh treatment to which they were constantly subjected by the Egyptians). People in general thought that his sympathy for the Isrā'īlis was due to his being nursed and brought up by an Isrā'īli woman. It is also possible that Allah Ta'ālā

may have informed him through his mother or by some other means that he himself was an Isrā'īli and that the woman who had nursed him was in fact his own mother.

Anyway, being in extreme anger, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام hit the Egyptian with such force that he died on the spot. There were no witnesses to this incident except the Isrā'īli, and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was certain that he (the Isrā'īli) would not inform against him.

The Egyptian's death filled Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with remorse and he said, هَذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُضِلٌّ مُبِينٌ (This is some of Satan's act, He is indeed a clear enemy who misleads - 28:15). Then he prayed to Allah.

رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

O my Lord! I have wronged myself, so forgive me. So He forgave him. Indeed He is the Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful - 28:16.

After this incident Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام made secret inquiries about the reaction of the Egyptian about the murder and whether the matter was reported to the Pharaoh. He learned that the report that was made to the Pharaoh merely said that an Isrā'īli had killed an Egyptian for which their tribe should make full retribution, and that no mercy should be shown to them.

The Pharaoh asked them to apprehend the murderer and produce him with full proof of his guilt because although he was their own king he did not think it was right to punish someone without sufficient evidence. He assured them that if they produced the offender with sufficient proof of his guilt he would not be spared. Thereupon people went out in search of the murderer but found no clue which could lead them to him.

The next day as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came out of his house he saw the same Isrā'īli again fighting with an Egyptian. On seeing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام he again called to him for help. But Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who was full of remorse at what had happened the day before was very angry and blamed the Isrā'īlie for picking up fights. However, he wanted to stop the man of Pharaoh from attacking the Isrā'īli, and at the same time reproached the Isrā'īli for being so quarrelsome. The Isrā'īli, seeing Mūsā عليه السلام in anger was frightened and feared that he would kill him too. So he called out, "O Mūsā! Will you kill me too as you killed a man yesterday?"

And so they parted, but the Egyptian hastened to inform the people who were on the look out for the murderer that the Isrā'īli himself had accused Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of having murdered a man the day before. The Pharaoh who was informed of this latest development at once sent his soldiers to apprehend Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and to execute him. The soldiers were confident that there was no way for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to escape and therefore they took the main road of the city searching for him. Somehow a follower of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who lived in a far flung area of the city got wind of the Pharaoh's order to kill him and managed to reach Mūsā عليه السلام through smaller streets to warn him of the impending danger.

At this point in his narration, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه paused again and said, "O Ibn Jubair! This was the fifth test (فنون) for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام when death had overcome him but Allah Ta'ālā saved his life".

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at once left the city and headed for Madyan. All his life was spent in comfort and luxury and he had never undertaken a task involving physical exertion. He was also unfamiliar with the surrounding areas and the roads connecting them. But he had full faith in Allah عَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ (I hope my Lord will guide me to the straight path - 28:22).

As he approached Madyan, he stopped at a well where people had gathered and were drawing water for their animals. There he saw two girls standing away from the crowd with their goats. He asked them why they stood apart to which they replied that being unable to contend with men for water they were waiting until they had finished watering their animals and then, if any water was left, they would give it to their goats. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was moved to pity for the girls and being physically a strong man he pushed forward and in no time he watered their goats. The girls went home with their herd and he sat under the shade of a tree and prayed: رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ (O my Lord, I am in need of whatever good you may send down to me - 28:24). By this prayer he sought Allah's help in providing him something to eat and a place to stay.

Now when the girls returned home with their herd earlier than usual their father was surprised, but the girls told him how a kind man had helped them and watered their goats. The father asked one of the girls to

bring the man home which she did, and when he heard the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he said: ("Do not fear, you have escaped from the wrongdoing people." - 28:25).

One of the girls suggested to her father to engage Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on wages and said *يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنِ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ* (Dear father, hire him; the best man you hire, is the one who is strong, trustworthy - 28:26). the father was disconcerted at her words and asked her how she knew that he was strong and trust-worthy. The girl replied that she witnessed his strength when he pushed aside all the other shepherds and drew water for her goats. And she knew him to be trustworthy because when she went to bring him home he cast his eyes down and did not raise them until she had conveyed to him his invitation. Then he told her to follow him and to guide him to this place from behind. Only a person who is totally trustworthy would conduct himself in such a manner. The father (He was Sayyidnā Shua'ib عليه السلام, a prophet of Allah), having being fully satisfied on this score, proposed to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that if he would agree to work for him for eight years he would give the latter one of his daughters in marriage. He also said that he would like it if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, of his own free choice, worked for him for a further period of two years, but this would not be a condition for his marriage with his daughter. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام accepted these terms and ultimately, by Allah's command, rendered full ten years service to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Sa'id Ibn Jubair رضي الله عنه says, "Once a Christian scholar met me and asked me whether I knew how long Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام worked for Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. This was before Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه had narrated to me this Ḥadīth. So I told him that I did not know the answer to his question. Afterwards when I met Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه and put the same question to him he informed me that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was bound to do service for the contractual period of eight years which could not be reduced in any circumstances. Also, it was Allah's will that he should also serve the additional optional two years. Therefore, he did actually serve Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام for full ten years. Later, when I met the Christian scholar and gave him the information, he asked me whether the person from whom I learnt this was more knowledgeable than I was. I replied him in affirmative and told him that indeed he was a very learned

person and the best among us".

Having completed ten years of service with Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام departed from Madyan with his wife. He had chosen an unfrequented and unfamiliar route, and on a cold, dark night when he saw fire on the mount of Ṭūr he went there to bring some for his wife. There he saw strange sights, was granted the miracles of the staff (عَصَا) and the bright hand (يَدٌ بَيَاضَاءُ) and was also entrusted with the Mission of Prophethood. This story has been related by the Holy Qur'ān in the preceding pages. At the mount of Ṭūr he was also commanded by Allah to proceed to Egypt and place his message before the Pharaoh. He was anxious how he would discharge this duty when he has been declared by the royal court as an absconding offender and was under the sentence of death. Moreover, he recalled his stammer. So he prayed to Allah to remove these impediments. In response to his prayer Allah appointed his brother Hārūn عليه السلام to share his prophethood and through a revelation commanded the latter to receive him before he entered Egypt. The two brothers met and as commanded by Allah both of them went to the Pharaoh's court to invite him to accept the True Faith. After a while they were admitted to his presence after passing through several stages. They said to him: إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ "We are the messengers of your Lord". The Pharaoh asked them فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا (Who then is the Lord of you two? - 20:49). Their reply to this question has been reported in the Qur'ān itself.

رَبُّنَا الَّذِي آتَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ، ثُمَّ هَدَى

Our Lord is He who gave everything its shape, then guidance -
20:50.

The Pharaoh then asked them what they wanted. He charged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام with the murder of the Egyptian and at the same time reminded him how he had brought him up in his own palace and the great kindness he had shown towards him. The reply which Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام gave on both these points is mentioned in the Qur'ān. That is, the murder of the Egyptian was a mistake for which he had asked Allah's forgiveness. As for the second point, he accused the Pharaoh of having enslaved the Banī Isrā'īl and of subjecting them to oppression. These things could not be allowed to continue for ever and in consequence an inevitable destiny so decreed that he should be brought up in the

Pharaoh's palace. It was Allah's will and so it came to pass and he owed no gratitude to anyone. He then asked the Pharaoh to accept the True Faith and free the Banī Isrā'īl from the slavery. The Pharaoh refused, and asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to show some sign to prove his claim of prophethood. Mūsā عليه السلام cast his staff (عصا) on the ground and it turned into a huge snake, which advanced towards the Pharaoh with a fearsome manner. In great fright the Pharaoh crawled under his throne and begged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to save his life. Mūsā عليه السلام picked up the snake and it became a staff again. He then showed the Pharaoh his second miracle. He pressed his hand under his armpit and when he brought it out it was shining brilliantly. Then he repeated the action and his hand became normal.

The Pharaoh was in great terror at what he had seen. He assembled all his advisors and asked them to consider and decide how best they could meet the threat posed by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Having discussed the matter among themselves, the advisors assured him that the matter was not as serious as appeared at first sight. Those two men were magicians who, by their sorcery, wanted to deprive him of his Kingdom and also to destroy their religion which regarded him as god, worthy of worship. They advised him not to accept any demand made by the two magicians and on the other hand to invite all the great magicians living in Egypt who would, by their skill, prevail upon the two visiting magicians.

The Pharaoh accepted this advice. He ordered all the famous magicians in Egypt to be brought before him, and when they came he told them what was expected of them. They asked the Pharaoh what was the special trick of the magician whom they were to confront. They were informed that he could turn his staff into a snake. At this, the magicians said in a casual manner that it was not a big deal. They too could change staffs and ropes into snakes and that nobody could beat them at that trick. They also wanted to know what their reward would be if they defeated their opponent. The Pharaoh replied, "If you are successful in this contest I will make you part of my own family and you will be given everything that you desire".

The magicians in agreement with Mūsā عليه السلام appointed the morning of the day of their festival for the contest. Ibn Jubair رحمته الله reports that the

day of their festival was the 10th of Muḥarram. A large number of people were gathered in a vast open space to see the contest. They were in no doubt about its outcome. They scoffed at Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and said tauntingly that in case he got the better of their own magicians, they would accept his religion لَعَلَّنَا تَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ إِنْ كَانُوا هُمُ الْغَالِبِينَ (So that we may follow the sorcerers if they are victorious - 26:40).

When everything was ready, the Egyptians asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام whether he would like to begin the contest or he wanted them to make the start. He invited them to show their tricks first. So they threw their staffs and ropes with the words بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ (By the majesty of the Pharaoh we are going to prevail definitely - 26:44) which at once turned into creeping, coiling snakes.

This sight evoked fear in the heart of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى (So, Musa concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67). Now this fear could be a natural human reaction and not even prophets are free from it. Or it may be that he was overtaken by a momentary doubt about the success of his own mission. But Allah commanded him by means of revelation to cast his staff. As he did so, it turned into a huge snake and ate up all the snakes which the Egyptians had produced with their tricks. The magicians who knew everything about magic at once realized that the performance of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was no magic but a miracle from Allah. So they openly announced their faith in the One and Only Allah and accepted the religion brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. They said they repented their past sins and abjured the faith of their forefathers. Thus, Allah effectively belittled the Pharaoh and his companions frustrating their evil designs فَغَلِبُوا هَٰذَا لَكَ وَانْقَلَبُوا صُغُرَيْنِ (So, they were overcome there and turned humiliated - 7:119). It is also reported that while the contest was in progress 'Āsiya, the Pharaoh's wife, put on a humble garb and prayed to Allah for Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. The people of Pharaoh were under the impression that she was anxious for the Pharaoh and was praying for him while all her worries were about Mūsā عليه السلام.

The Pharaoh was now in a dilemma. He had no intention of allowing Banī Isrā'īl to leave Egypt. In the years that followed Egypt was visited by several calamities such as floods, locusts, lice, frogs appearing in food and utensils etc. (these have been described in the Qur'ān as آيات مفصلات (Signs distinct 7:133). The Pharaoh would, at the time of each such

visitation, approach Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and promised to release Banī Isrā'īl from his bondage and let them leave Egypt if he prayed to Allah to deliver him from the disaster. But as soon as the affliction was removed through the prayers of Mūsā عليه السلام the Pharaoh reneged on his promise. This happened several times until Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to take Banī Isrā'īl with him and leave Egypt. One night he and the whole tribe of Banī Isrā'īl quietly stole out of Egypt. The next morning when the Pharaoh discovered their escape, he assembled his army and went after them. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his men soon came to a river which had to be crossed. Allah commanded the river that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would strike its water with his staff it should part to make twelve exits for the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl and that when they had crossed over, it should resume its normal flow again.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the river, he forgot that if he struck the river with his staff it would open up twelve passages for him and his men. As they stood there not knowing what to do, the Pharaoh and his army appeared in the distance. In utter despair they cried إِنَّا لَمَذْرُكُونَ (Surely we are overtaken - 26:61). At that critical moment Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام remembered Allah's promise to him. He at once struck his staff on the water and the river parted showing twelve passageways. Quickly he and his men went across. The Pharaoh and his army who were hard on their heels followed them over the passageways but when they reached the midstream and the last of the Banī Isrā'īl had crossed over safely, the water of the river flowed over the passageways as commanded by Allah. And so the Pharaoh and his entire army perished under the eyes of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his men. Some of the men feared that the Pharaoh might have escaped death and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed to Allah to reveal his death to them. Then by the command of Allah the Pharaoh's dead body was tossed out of the river and everybody witnessed his end.

As Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Banī Isrā'īl continued their journey they came across a people who worshipped idols which they themselves had fashioned. Banī Isrā'īl were tempted and they said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام : يُمُوسَى اجْعَلْ لَنَا إِلَهًا كَمَا لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مَتَّبِعْتُمُوهُمْ فِيهِ : (O Mūsā! make a god for us like they have gods". He (Mūsā) said, "You are really an ignorant people. What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed" - 7:138,

139). He also reminded them of the miracles which Allah had revealed in their behalf and the bounties which He had showered on them and asked them how they could entertain such wicked ideas. Having admonished them thus, he and his party proceeded on their travel until they came to a place where they camped. There he said to his men, "You stay here while I go to my Lord. I will return after thirty days. In my absence my brother Hārūn will act as my deputy and you should obey him in all matters".

Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام went to the mount of Ṭūr where he was commanded by Allah to fast for thirty continuous days in order to prepare himself for conversation with Him. After fasting for thirty days continuously he sensed a bad odor in his mouth which is usual when people fast for long periods, and he thought it would be grossly irreverent for him to appear before Allah and receive His message in that state. So he cleaned his mouth with an aromatic grass which grew on a hill close by. When he approached the August presence, Allah asked him why he had broken the fast. He replied, "O Lord! I merely wished to get rid of the offensive smell in my mouth before coming to Your presence". Allah said, "O Mūsā! Surely you know that the odor from the mouth of a person who observes fast is more pleasant to Us than the fragrance of the perfume of musk. Go back; fast for ten more days and then return to Us." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام obeyed Allah's command.

After the departure of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام his brother Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام assembled Banī Isrā'īl and addressed them saying, "You have brought along with you many things which you either borrowed from the people of the Pharaoh (Egyptians) or which were deposited with you by them, as a trust. At the same time there are many things belonging to you which you loaned to them or left with them in trust. You seem to think that you can appropriate to yourself the Egyptian's property in lieu of what you have left behind with them. I do not consider this deal as lawful; and since we cannot return to the Egyptians what really belongs to them, I suggest that we dig a pit and bury all such property in it". Banī Isrā'īl accepted this advice and threw everything into the pit. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام then had a big fire built over it so that everything was reduced to ashes. He said, "Now it is neither theirs nor ours".

Among the Banī Isrā'īl there was a man by the name of Sāmiri who, though not one of them, had migrated with them when they left Egypt.

He came from a tribe who worshipped cows. Being an observant person he noticed a strange phenomenon namely that wherever Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام put his foot, he left traces of life. He picked up a handful of earth from one such place and as he was going along he met Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام who thought that the man had in his hand something of value belonging to the Egyptians. He told him to throw it into the pit as the others had done, but Sāmiri said that what he held in his hand was the earth from the footprints of Sayyidnā Jibra'il عليه السلام with whose help they all had crossed the river and that he would not throw it away unless Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام promised to pray to Allah for the fulfillment of a wish which he cherished in his heart. On the latter's promise to do so he threw the earth in this pit and as promised, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام prayed to Allah to grant Sāmiri his wish. Thereupon Sāmiri prayed, "I wish that all the gold, silver, iron and brass which has been thrown in this may take the shape of a calf". Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام had already prayed to Allah on behalf of Sāmiri, and his prayer was granted by Allah. So all the valuables and other metals which had been thrown in the pit assumed the cast of a calf which had no life but produced a sound like the bellow of a bull. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه it was not the sound of a living thing but more like the low-pitched sound of wind passing through a hollow passage.

This strange event greatly perplexed the Banī Isrā'īl and split them into several groups. Sāmiri told them that the calf was the true God and that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had strayed from the right path. One group accepted his claim and adopted the worship of the calf. Another group reserved their judgment until Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would explain to them how the matter stood, while a third group rejected Sāmiri's claim outright and refused to accept the calf as their god.

When Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام saw this mischief and discord he admonished the people and said:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا قُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي

"O my people! You have only been led astray with it, and your Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So follow me and obey my command." - 20:90.

But they asked about Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام why did not he come back

while he had promised to return after thirty days and even after forty days nearing completion there was no news of him. Some foolish persons suggested that perhaps he had lost his Allah and was even at that time searching for Him.

While these events were taking place at the camp, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام having completed forty days of fasting was honoured with conversing with Allah Ta'ālā who informed him of the disorder into which Banī Isrā'īl had fallen:

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَى إِلَى قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا

So Mūsā went back to his people in anger and sorrow. (20:86)

He put aside the Tablets of Torah which he had brought from the mount of Ṭūr and pulled his brother Hārūn by the hairs. Later, when he had calmed down and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام had given an account of everything that had happened, he accepted the explanation given by his brother and prayed to Allah to forgive him.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام then went to Sāmiri and asked him to explain his actions. He replied:

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي

I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger (the angel). Then I cast it, and thus my inner self tempted me - 20:96.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام then replied to him with the following words:

فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تَخْلَفَنَّهُ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا

He (Musa) said, "Then go away, for your fate in this life is to say: Do not touch me. And, of course, you have another promise, never to be held back from you. And look at your god to which you stayed devoted. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it thoroughly in the sea. (20:97)

Banī Isrā'īl now realized that they had been led astray and they admired those who agreed with Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام in negating the divinity of the calf. They begged Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to pray to Allah to forgive them and that they were ready to expiate for their sins. Sayyidnā

Mūsā عليه السلام took pains in selecting seventy persons from amongst them who were well-known for their virtue and piety and who, according to his knowledge had abstained from the worship of the calf. He led this selected group to the mount of Ṭūr where all of them might beseech Allah's Mercy. But as they approached the mount, the earth shook in a violent earthquake. On this, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام felt greatly embarrassed in front of the group he was leading as well as before his people in general, therefore he pleaded to Allah:

رَبِّ لَوْ شِئْتَ أَهْلَكْتَهُمْ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَإِيَّايَ أَتَهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ السُّفَهَاءُ مِنَّا

"My Lord, had it been Your will, You could have destroyed them earlier, and me too. Would you destroy us for what the foolish among them have done?" - 7:155.

It then transpired that the cause of the earthquake was that despite all his inquiries and precautions some of the men included in the delegation had indeed worshipped the calf and still cherished a sense of reverence for it.

Allah Ta'alā replied to the prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as follows:

وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَسَاكُنْهَا لِلَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ
بِآيَاتِنَا يُؤْمِنُونَ. الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ الرَّسُولَ النَّبِيَّ الْأُمِّيَّ الَّذِي يَجِدُونَهُ مَكْتُوبًا عِنْدَهُمْ فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ

"And My mercy extends to everything. So, I shall write it for those who fear, and pay Zakāh, and those who do believe in Our verses. Those who follow the Messenger, the *Ummī* (unlettered) prophet whom they find written with them in the Torah and the Injil (The gospels)". (7:156, 157)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام said, "O Lord! I had prayed to You on behalf of my people who have repented their evil deeds but You have just informed me that Your mercy encompasses everyone but the Banī Isrā'īl. O Lord! Why was my birth not delayed and why was I not born among the favoured people of the unlettered Prophet?" On this, Allah told him that the only way through which Banī Isrā'īl's repentance could be accepted by Him was that each one of them should slay with sword anyone he finds from among his relations, be he his father or son and at the same spot where the sin of worshipping the calf was committed. Thereupon those among the seventy delegates whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had

brought with him in the belief that they were pious people, but who in their hearts felt reverence for the calf, also repented and obeyed the rigorous condition for the expiation of their sins, and when this was done, Allah forgave the sins of the slayers as well as the slain.

It will be recalled that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people from the Ṭūr on learning that they had fallen into mischief he had put aside in anger the Tablets which he had brought from the mount. He now picked them up and led his people towards the Holy land (Syria). On the way they passed by a city where a mighty and powerful people lived whose unusual appearance inspired fear in the hearts of all who saw them. Many tales of their valour and cruelty were related to the Banī Isrā'īl so that when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام proposed to enter the city they refused and said, "O Mūsā! These people are tyrants and we cannot face them. We will not enter this city so long as they are there, but if somehow, they can be made to leave the city we will gladly enter it." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام argued with them but they were adamant and refused to be moved.

The Holy Qur'ān has, at another place, mentioned that two persons tried to convince Banī Isrā'īl to enter the city. According to Yazid Ibn Hārūn, a narrator of this report, Sayyidnā Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه has interpreted the relevant verse to the effect that these two men belonged to the tyrant nation. They after coming out from the city had embraced the faith of Mūsā عليه السلام and realized that Banī Isrā'īl are terrified by their nation. Therefore, they said to Banī Isrā'īl, "We are fully aware of the nature of our own nation. You are terrified of their high stature and their large number, but in reality they have no strength of heart, nor do they have courage to face you. If you proceed to the gate of the city, you will see that they will surrender and you will prevail." Some commentators have held that these two men were from Banī Isrā'īl and convinced them to proceed to the city, but even after hearing their advice they flatly refused and addressed Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the most absurd manner as mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

They said:

يُؤْمِسُوا إِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ

"O Mūsā! we shall never enter it, in any case, so long as they are there. So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, We are

sitting right here." (5:24)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had seen enough of the arrogance and defiant attitude of Banī Isrā'īl in spite of the numerous favours and benefits showered upon them by Allah and had refrained so far from praying against them for their provocations. But the rude reply which they now gave him filled his heart with sorrow and he prayed against them and termed them as فَاسِقِينَ (Transgressors). Allah Ta'ālā accepted his prayer, and holding them as فَاسِقِينَ (transgressors), denied them entry into the Holy Land for forty years and confined them to an open plain where they wandered aimlessly from morning till evening. However since Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was also with them, Allah favoured them with many gifts even while they suffered punishment. Wherever they went in this waterless desert of Tih (Sinai) a constant cloud shaded them from the burning sun. For food, Allah sent to them مَنْ وَ سَلْوَى (Manna is a viscous substance from the ash tree and Salwa is a quail-like bird). As if by a miracle their clothes were never torn nor did they become dirty. They were given a square stone and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was instructed to strike it with his staff whenever they needed water and twelve springs of sweet water - three on each side - gushed out of it to serve the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl, thus avoiding all disputes. At the end of their journeys wherever they camped, they found that the square stone was there already. (Qurṭubī)

According to the present narration of this Ḥadīth-ul-Futūn, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه had attributed it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. That Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه did not tell this story on his own, or after hearing it from someone else is the correct view in my opinion which is supported by the following event:

When Sayyidnā Mu'awiyā رضي الله عنه heard this Ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, he denied the truth of that part of the story which said that while the men of the Pharaoh were unable to find any clue which could lead them to the murderer of the Egyptian (i.e. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام), it was disclosed by the second Egyptian with whom the Isrā'īlī of the previous day was fighting. Sayyidnā Mu'awiyā's رضي الله عنه objection was that the Egyptian being ignorant of the previous day's murder could not have known and disclosed the name of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as the murder. The only witness to the event was the Isrā'īlī.

When Sayyidnā Mu'awiyā ؓ expressed his doubts about this part of the Ḥadīth Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ got angry and took the former by the hand and brought him to Sa'd Ibn Mālīk Zuhri and asked him if he remembered the occasion when the Holy Prophet ﷺ related the story about the murdered Egyptian. When Sa'd Ibn Mālīk ؓ replied in the affirmative he asked him, "Now tell me whether it was the Isrā'īli or the Egyptian who brought information about the murderer to the Pharaoh?", Sa'd Ibn Mālīk ؓ replied that it was the Egyptian because he had heard the Isrā'īli say that the murder was committed by Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ and reported the matter to the Pharaoh. Imām Nasa'ī has reproduced this long Ḥadīth in كتاب التفسير of his larger book Al-Sunan al-Kubrā.

Ṭabarī and Ibn Abī Ḥatīm have both reproduced this Ḥadīth in detail in their Commentaries and have expressed the view that it is not مَرْفُوع (marfū') i.e. it is not mentioned by the Holy Prophet ﷺ but is in the words of Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ؓ which he has taken from those Isrā'īli traditions of Ka'b al-Aḥbār whose reproduction and narration is permissible. It is true, however, that at places it contains sentences of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Ibn Kathīr has reproduced this Ḥadīth in his Commentary and after giving his own arguments says that, like Tabari and Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, Sheikh Abul Hajjaj Mizzi also believes that this tradition is مَوْقُوف which means that it is a saying of Sayyidna Ibn 'Abbās ؓ and not of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The results, lessons and the great benefits to be obtained from the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ

The importance which the Qur'ān attaches to the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ is evident from the fact that it is repeated frequently in several Sūrahs, the reason being that it contains numerous lessons for mankind, instances of high wisdom and unusual manifestation of the Supreme Power of Allah. All these things confirm a true believer in his beliefs, and provide for him practical and moral guidance. A brief account of some of these is given in the following paragraphs.

The Pharaoh's foolish plan and how Allah frustrated it

On being told that a boy born to the Isrā'īlites would cause the overthrow of his Kingdom, the Pharaoh issued orders that all male children born among the Isrā'īlies should be put to death. Later on for his

personal and diplomatic reasons he modified those orders so that male children born in alternate years only were put to death. Allah had the power to bring about the birth of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the year in which the male children born to the Isrā'īlies were spared, but He willed that the tyrant's brutal plan should recoil on himself. Therefore it was decreed that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام should be born in the year when the new born Isrā'īli boys were to be put to death. Then Allah in His Supreme Wisdom created a situation in which the Pharaoh took Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام under his care and brought him up in his own palace. While all the Isrā'īli male children were being put to death lest any of them pose a threat to the Pharaoh's authority, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام grew up in the luxury of the royal palace where he was loved and respected by everyone.

Divine favours for the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام

If Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had accepted the milk from any other wet-nurse he would have spent his early years in the Pharaoh's palace and his mother would have suffered great anguish at being separated from her son. Also he would have been nursed by an infidel woman. But an inscrutable decree of providence saved him from being nourished by an infidel woman and at the same time united him with his mother. The Pharaoh and his wife felt beholden to her and not only showered gifts on her but also gave her good remuneration for her services. By bringing Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to her own house she escaped the necessity of having to live in the Pharaoh's palace like any other servant. **فَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ**.

Good news for industrialists and traders

There is a Ḥadīth according to which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that an industrialist or a businessman who, while engaged in his trade also desired to win the good-will of Allah was like the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, who nursed her own child and at the same time was paid for her services (Ibn Kathīr). It means that if a mason who builds a mosque, a school or a building for public use is concerned only with his wages, he would receive it, but nothing more. But if he undertook to construct these buildings in preference to other jobs with the intention that these would be used for good purposes and would benefit pious persons then, like the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he would receive his wages as well as the religious benefit.

The chosen servants of Allah are gifted with a special attribute so that all who see them, love them

وَالْفَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي

And I have cast love on you from Myself - 20:39.

This verse suggests that Allah bestows upon his chosen servants a special grace which causes all men, friend or foe, to love them. Of course, the prophets enjoy this grace to a much greater degree, but many saints are also known to have possessed it.

Why was the murder of the Egyptian by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام regarded as a sin?

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام saw an Egyptian infidel fighting an Isrā'īli Muslim, he struck the former with a blow causing his death. He described this act as an act of Satan and prayed to Allah for forgiveness and Allah accepted his prayer.

Here is a point for consideration by jurists. This Egyptian was an infidel and a citizen of a non-Muslim state who had no peace agreement between him and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Also he could not be given the status of a ذِمِّي (Dhimmi: A non-Muslim under Muslim rule) who is entitled to full protection from the Muslims. He was a non-Muslim citizen of دار الحرب (Enemy country) and according to Muslim law killing such a person does not constitute a sin. So why was the murder of the Egyptian described as an act of Satan and a sin?

In none of the commentaries has this issue been brought up for consideration. Some time back, at the behest of Haḍrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thanavī رحمه الله تعالى I began writing my book احكام القرآن and when I came to this issue, I sought his guidance, and his explanation was that although there was no covenant between Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Egyptian nor did he enjoy the status of a Dhimmi (a non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim state) yet neither of them was the head of a state. They were both subjects of the Pharaoh and at peace with each other. This was for all practical purposes an implied covenant between the two of them. Thus the murder of the Egyptian was in the nature of violation of the implied compact and therefore a sin. And since the murder was not deliberate but accidental, it does not adversely affect the sanctity of his Prophethood. For this reason in pre-partition India when both the Muslims and the Hindus

lived under the British rule, Hadrat Maulānā Thānavi رحمه الله تعالى did not consider it lawful for the Muslims to take the life or property of a Hindu.

Helping the weak and public service have their own rewards both in this world and in the hereafter

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام reached the outskirts of Madyan, he noticed two girls who stood aside because they were too weak to contend against men and water their goats. These girls were complete strangers to him and he himself was a homeless wanderer. But being a decent man he was prompted to come to their help. He watered their goats and by this act of kindness he gained the pleasure of Allah. And his worldly reward was that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام gave him his daughter in marriage.

The philosophy and benefits of a situation in which one Messenger was an employee and the other an employer

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام came to the house of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام as an honoured guest. After sometime when he felt sufficiently secure from pursuit by the Pharaoh's soldiers, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, at the suggestion of his daughter, offered him employment on wages. This offer embodies a deep philosophy from Allah and guidance for mankind.

First: Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was a Prophet of Allah Ta'ālā and it was not beyond his means to entertain a traveler for sometime without asking for recompense. But it seems that by prophetic wisdom he had perceived that being a person of noble character Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would not accept his hospitality much longer and would move to some other place where he might suffer hardship. He therefore made a straight offer of employment. Here is a lesson that it is not proper to become a burden on somebody's hospitality for long periods.

Second: Allah Ta'ālā had chosen Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام for the grant of prophethood, and although toil and hard labour are neither the pre-conditions for prophethood, nor can the prophethood be obtained by any amount of exertion and effort, because it is a pure gift from Allah, yet His Supreme Wisdom had decreed that the prophets should also undergo a period of strenuous physical labour as a means of character building and for reforming others. The life of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had been spent in comfort and luxury and since he was destined to be a leader of mankind and to reform their moral life, his service with Sayyidnā Shu'aib

عليه السلام was to accustom him to hard work and to prepare him for the great mission for which Allah had chosen him.

Third: Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was given the task of tending the flocks of goats of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. It is rather strange that many prophets have, at one time or the other, performed similar duties. Now a goat often breaks away from the main flock to the great annoyance of the shepherd. If he lets it stray it may be lost or even fall prey to a wolf, and if he punishes it, he may cause injury to the delicate animal. Therefore he has to be very patient with his flock. The same is the case with prophets; they can neither ignore the errant humanity nor can they be too severe in disciplining them. They have to conduct themselves with great patience and forbearance.

How to choose the best man for a job

The daughter of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام suggested to her father that he should employ Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in his service as the latter was both strong and honest (قَوِيٌّ، أَمِينٌ). The word قَوِيٌّ (*qawiyy*: strong) is applied to a person who is strong and has ability to perform satisfactorily the duties which are entrusted to him, and أَمِينٌ (*amīn*, honest) means that the record of his past life proves his honesty and integrity.

These two brief words, if considered in depth, cover all the qualities for selecting a person for different jobs and offices, public or private. In some cases even the detailed parameters laid down for the selection of employees in contemporary institutions are not so comprehensive as these two words are. Honesty, in particular, is something totally neglected today when selecting a candidate, the entire importance being given to academic degrees only. The corruption, disorder and mismanagement seen in public and private institutions at present is mainly caused by neglecting honesty and integrity in the employees. If a person is qualified and wise, but devoid of honesty, he may devise ways to protect himself from rules against his inefficiency and corruption. This is exactly what has rendered many public and private institutions inefficient and corrupt. Islam has therefore laid great emphasis on honesty and integrity, the blessings of which have been witnessed by the world through the centuries.

Difference between the approach of magicians and that of the prophets

The address which the Pharaoh delivered to his magicians in which he warned them of the threat to the country called for a patriotic response from the magicians, but they exploited the situation and negotiated their reward in case they gained victory over Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. On the other hand the prophets declare openly that they do not expect any reward for their services.

وَلَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ

I do not claim from you any reward for it - 26:109

Among the many factors for the success of their mission is the denial of all material rewards for their services. Nowadays the non-payment of remuneration to scholars, jurists, preachers etc. from Government sources has compelled them to accept payment for their services which, though permitted by the later jurists, has reduced the effectiveness of their mission.

Truth about the magic of the Egyptian magicians

The Egyptian magicians caused their sticks and ropes to appear as if they had really turned into snakes. The question is whether they were in reality turned into snakes. The Qur'an says:

يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى

Seemed to him, due to their magic as if they were running - 20:66.

This shows that they did not really become snakes, but it was some kind of mesmerism which cast a hypnotic spell on those present, to whom they appeared as running snakes. This, of course, does not mean that things or substances cannot be transformed by magic, but the Egyptian magicians did not possess these powers.

Division into tribes in matters of social life is not censurable

Islam has condemned the notion that regional, linguistic, ethnic and tribal divisions become the basis of nationalism. It has encouraged in all possible manners the elimination of all such differences and prejudices. The very foundation of Muslim polity rests on Islamic nationalism where

people of diverse description, race, lineage and culture constitute one single nation. The first step which the Holy Prophet ﷺ took when laying down the foundations of the Islamic state at Madīnah was to unite the Muhajirs and the Anṣār into a single bond of brotherhood. In his last sermon (حجة الوداع) he ﷺ laid down the rule, for all times to come, that prejudices and divisions based on geographical region, race and language are the idols which Islam has demolished. Nevertheless, their distinctions in the matters of social life have been duly recognized and permitted within reasonable limits. This is to avoid any hardship for the people due to the fact that the customs of living, dress, food etc. vary from one area to the other and from one tribe to another.

The Isrā'īlites whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام led out of Egypt were divided into twelve tribes and when crossing the river on their flight twelve passageways were cleared, one for each tribe. Similarly in the plain of Tīh (the waterless desert where Banī Isrā'īl wandered for forty years) the stone, by a miracle shot forth twelve springs of water in order that the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl might not engage in strife over the use of water.

Appointment of a deputy to manage the affairs of a community

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام parted from his people in order to engage himself in prayers at the mount of Ṭūr for thirty days, he appointed Sayyidnā Harūn عليه السلام as his deputy during his absence and commanded his people to obey the latter in all matters, so that disputes and quarrels might not rise among them. This shows that when the head of a community or a family proceeds on a journey, he should, following the practice of the prophets, appoint a deputy to maintain order and discipline among them.

A disagreeable course of action may temporarily be adopted if it prevents disruption among Muslims

When Banī Isrā'īl started worshipping the calf during the absence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, Sayyidnā Harūn عليه السلام remonstrated with them but did not go to the extent of severing all relations with them and his justification was that any harsh action by him would have caused a split among the Banī Isrā'īl.

إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتُ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي

"I feared that you would say, 'You have caused discord among the children of Isrā'īl and did not observe my advice'" . (20:94)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام accepted this explanation and prayed to Allah in favor of his brother. It leads to the principle that it is permissible to take a lenient view against an evil as a temporary expediency to prevent discord and strife among Muslims.

A vital principle of Prophetic Mission

When ordering Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام to go to Egypt and invite the Pharaoh to the path of righteousness, Allah also enjoined upon them to adopt a soft attitude toward him. **فَقُولَا لَهُ قَوْلًا لَّيِّنًا لَّعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَى** (So, speak to him in soft words. May be, he takes to the advice or fears [Allah] - 20:44). Here an important principle has been enunciated that those who wish to reform people and lead them to a life of virtue should always be gentle and amiable towards their opponents however obstinate and perverse they may be. By such methods alone can they be persuaded to give heed to the message brought to them by the prophets.

The Pharaoh, who claimed to be a god, was also absolutely guilty of the massacre of thousands of Isrā'īli children just to safeguard his life and his Kingdom. But when Allah sent the two messengers to him, He gave them a guideline, namely that they should talk to him in a gentle and persuasive manner so that he might ponder and reflect on the message which they had brought to him. This guideline was emphasized in spite of the fact that Allah knew that the Pharaoh would never give up his obduracy nor his perverse ways. Here the intention was to bind the prophets to a conduct which might induce people to reflect and ultimately instill the fear of Allah in their hearts.

An unfortunate tendency is in vogue among the scholars of criticizing each other which they regard as a service to Islam. There is a need for curbing this tendency and the true teaching of Islam should be adopted.

Verses 45 - 50

قَالَ رَبَّنَا إِنَّا نَخَافُ أَنْ يُفْرِطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطَّعَى ﴿٥٥﴾ قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا
إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى ﴿٥٦﴾ فَأَتِيَهُ فَقُولا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ

مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَلَا تَعْدِبْهُمْ ۖ قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۖ وَالسَّلَامُ
عَلَىٰ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿٤٧﴾ إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ
كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٤٨﴾ قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمَا يُمُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾ قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي
أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ۖ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ ﴿٥٠﴾

They said, "Our Lord, we are afraid he will hasten to commit excess against us, or will cross all bounds." [45]

He said, "Do not be afraid. I am surely with you both. I hear and I see. [46] So, come to him and say, 'We are the messengers of your Lord. So, let the children of Isrā'īl go with us, and do not torment them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord. And peace be upon the one who follows the guidance. [47] Verily, it has been revealed to us that the punishment is for the one who denies and turns away.'" [48]

He (the Pharaoh) said, "Who then is the Lord of you two, O Mūsā?" [49] He (Mūsā) said, "Our Lord is He who gave everything its shape, then guidance." [50]

Commentary

Why was Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام afraid?

The words إِنَّا نَخَافُ (We are afraid) signifies that here Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام expressed twofold fear before Allah. The first fear is pointed out by the word أَنْ يَفْرُطَ which means to cross all boundaries. So the meaning of the sentence is 'perhaps the Pharaoh would attack even before listening to us'. The other fear is mentioned with the words أَنْ يَطْغَى - which means that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was apprehensive that the Pharaoh might, after listening to his demands, become so refractory and perverse that he might speak about Allah in disrespectful terms.

It will be recalled that when prophethood was bestowed upon Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, he had prayed to Allah to depute Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام also to assist him in his mission, and Allah had accepted his prayer. At the same time Allah informed him سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا تَصِلُونَ إِلَيْنَا ("We make your arm stronger through (the help of) your

brother and will make for you the upper hand so they will not reach you (with any harm)" - 28:35) and that whatever else he asked for was granted to him (قَدْ أُوتِيَ سُؤْلُكَ يَمُوسَى) - "You have been granted your request O Mūsā" - 20:36. Among the things granted to him was شرح صدر (heart at peace) which means that he was made immune to fear. So, when he had received such firm assurances from Allah, how does one explain the fear expressed by him in this verse. One answer to this question is that the promise of victory and security from harm is rather vague in that victory may refer to success in debate with the Pharaoh and his men. It can also be argued that victory could come only if the Egyptians heard his arguments and reasonings, and saw his miracles but there was this possibility also that they might attack him before he had laid his arguments before them. Besides, شرح صدر does not mean elimination of natural fear.

The second point is that fear of fearsome things is a natural instinct and even prophets are not free from it in spite of their complete faith in the promises of Allah. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام himself was afraid to pick up his staff when it turned into a snake therefore Allah re-assured him with the word لَا تَخَفْ (do not be afraid). On all such occasions Allah removed their fears by propitious tidings. Three other verses: فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ (So, he went out of it (the city) in a state of fear, waiting (for what comes next) - 28:21) and فَاصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا (Then, next morning he was fearful, waiting [for what comes next] - 28:18) and فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى (So Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67) can also be quoted expressing the same fear. It was this natural fear which persuaded the Holy Prophet ﷺ to migrate to Madīnah and some of his Companions to migrate first to Abyssinia and later to Madīnah. In the Battle of Aḥẓāb the Muslims were so overawed by the strength of their enemies that they dug a trench as a protective measure even though Allah had promised them victory on numerous occasions. The truth is that while they did not have the least doubt about their ultimate victory, the fear which they felt was the result of a spontaneous human impulse in the face of danger, and the prophets being human are not immune to this impulse.

Allah said, إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَى ("I am surely with you both. I hear and I see." - 20:46) Here the word "with you" is used in the sense of divine help and support which human senses cannot perceive.

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام called upon the Pharaoh to embrace the True Faith and also to deliver the Banī Isrā'īl from bondage

This shows that the prophets have the duty of guiding mankind towards their salvation as well as to liberate their people from worldly and economic bondages. Therefore, in this verse Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام is reminded of both these duties.

God created everything; and everything is performing the functions assigned to it by Him

This point calls for some elucidation which is given in the following lines. The guidance which Allah gives to the prophets and which is in the nature of a duty imposed upon them is a special kind of guidance which is addressed only to human beings and Jinns who are gifted with intellect. There is also another kind of guidance known as guidance of Takwīn (creation) which every created thing possesses. Allah has given to fire, water, earth and air, and their compounds a special kind of feeling and perception which are not of the same nature as given to human beings and Jinns. This is the reason why the laws governing things which are permissible and those which are forbidden do not apply to them. Through this feeling and perception Allah has assigned duties to all created things and in obedience to this command of Takwīn and guidance, the earth, the sky and every other created thing is busy performing its allotted tasks. Air, water, fire and earth are all fulfilling the purpose for which they were created. They do not deviate from their destined course except by the command of Allah. And when He so commands the fire turns into a bed of flowers (as for Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام), and water acts as fire as for the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام (أُغْرِقُوا فَأَذْخَلُوا نَارًا - 71:25). Who has taught a newly born baby to draw milk from its mother's breast or to cry when hungry or in pain? It is this same Divine guidance which every created thing receives without any formal training.

In brief, every created thing has been programmed, by Allah, with a guidance of Takwīn (creation) which it is genetically bound to follow and deviating from the same is beyond its power. The other kind of guidance which is given to the human beings and to Jinns is not inherent in the nature and thus, is not compulsory but optional. It is this freedom of choice which renders them liable to reward for good deeds and to punishment for their sins. The verse أَعْطَى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَى (who gave

everything its shape then guidance - 20:50) refers to the guidance of Takwīn (تكويني هدايت).

Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) reminded the Pharaoh, at the first place, of those acts of Allah Ta'ālā which are obviously done by Him alone and about which no one else could claim that he has performed them. The Pharaoh totally unable to refute this argument, and in his confusion asked Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) a question which was designed to entangle him into giving a reply that would greatly offend the Egyptians. The question was: how did the people of bygone ages stand who all worshipped idols, and what was their fate? The Pharaoh's purpose was that if Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) replied (as the Pharaoh surmised he would) that they were all misguided and deserving of Hell, then he could instigate his people against the latter. But the reply which Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) gave was so wise and discreet that the Pharaoh's evil design was completely frustrated.

Verses 51 - 59

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى ﴿٥١﴾ قَالَ عَلِمَهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ
لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا
وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا
مِّنْ نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّى ﴿٥٣﴾ كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَامَكُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ
لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿٥٤﴾ مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ
تَارَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَى ﴿٥٦﴾ قَالَ
أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَمُوسَى ﴿٥٧﴾ فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ
بِسِحْرِ مِثْلِهِ فَأَجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَا نُخْلِفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ
مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿٥٨﴾ قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ
ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

He replied, "The knowledge about those is, in a book, with my Lord. My Lord does neither err nor forget. [52] (He is) the One who made the earth a cradle for you and made for you therein pathways to move, and sent down water from the heavens and brought out, with it, pairs of different vegetations: [53] Eat, and graze your cattle. Surely, in that there are signs for the people of understanding." [54]

From this (earth) We created you and in this we shall put you back and from this We shall raise you up once again. [55]

And We showed him (the Pharaoh) all Our signs, yet he belied and refused. [56] Said he, "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land with your sorcery, O Mūsā? [57] We will, then, bring to you a similar sorcery. So, make, between you and us, an appointment not to be backed out, neither by us nor from you - at an even place." [58]

He (Mūsā) said, "Your appointment is the festival day and that the people are assembled at forenoon." [59]

Commentary

Verse 51 tells us that the Pharaoh had asked the question regarding the end of earlier people. If Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had given a straightforward answer that they were misled and will go to Jahannam, then the Pharaoh would have got a chance to scorn that it was not just him whom Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام was blaming but all their ancestors as well. Naturally such a situation would have created doubts in the minds of people. Therefore Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام gave such an answer which was full of wisdom and did not give any chance to the Pharaoh for misleading the people. He said (as mentioned in verse 52) that only Allah knows their end. He never makes a mistake nor does He forget things. The words "My Lord does neither err" mean that it is inconceivable that Allah wills one thing and something different should happen.

The word أَزْوَاجٍ (pairs) used in verse 53 is used here in the sense of "Kinds" or "Species", and the word شَتَّى is the plural of the word شَيْئٌ which means "different" or "diverse". The verse means that Allah has created so many kinds of plants that they are beyond human reckoning and each of them contains special properties which make them invaluable to man for

his well-being. It is impossible for man to comprehend completely all the properties and uses of all the plants created by Allah Ta'ālā. For centuries scientists have been working to find out all about them and researches have revealed a great deal about their properties. However it is impossible to claim that whatever we know at present is the last word.

The next verse (54) says **إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى** (Surely, in that there are signs for the people of understanding. (20:54). The word **النُّهَى** is the plural of **نُهْيَة** (*nuhyah*) which is used in the same sense as **عَقْل** ('*aql*: Intelligence) because it enables wise and intelligent persons to avoid harmful acts.

The composition of every human being contains, together with the seed, the earth of the place when he will be buried

The words **مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ** (From this We created you) in verse 55 means that Allah created you from the earth. This verse is addressed to all mankind although it is known that man is created from seed and not from earth, except Sayyidnā 'Ādam **عليه السلام** who was created directly from earth. One possible explanation for this is that since Sayyidnā 'Ādam **عليه السلام** is the father of all mankind and was himself created from earth, therefore all his descendants have been similarly described. Others have said that the seed itself is made of earth therefore anything created from the seed is in fact created from the earth. According to Imam al-Qurṭubī رحمه الله تعالى the text of the Qur'ān clearly indicates that man is created from the earth.

By words **مَكَانًا سَوًى** (at an even place) in verse 58 the Pharaoh proposed that the contest between Sayyidnā Mūsā **عليه السلام** and his own magicians should be held at a place which should, as far as possible, be within easy access of the Egyptians, Sayyidnā Mūsā **عليه السلام** and the Banī Isrā'īl. The latter readily accepted this proposal and fixed the day and the time for the contest by suggesting **مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى** (Your appointment is the festival day and that the people are assembled at forenoon - 20:59). **يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ** has been explained differently by different authorities. Some say it was a special festival when the Egyptians, attired in beautiful dresses, gathered outside the towns, while others say that it was a Saturday (**يَوْمُ السَّبْتِ**), and according to some others it was the tenth day of Muḥarram (**عَاشُورَا**).

The great advantage in fixing for the contest

It was a wise move on the part of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to fix festival day as the day of contest when all Egyptians, high and low, were expected to assemble at an appointed place. There was also a point in fixing early forenoon as the time for the contest because this is the time when people, having finished their daily chores, are free to engage in other things. Also daylight and visibility are at their best in the early forenoon and people, while dispersing after witnessing a momentous event, spread the news far and wide. Thus when, with Allah's help, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام inflicted a crushing defeat on the Egyptian magicians, the story became known the same day to people living in far flung places.

Magic - its truth, forms and the rules governing it

For a detailed discussion on this subject reference may be made to the story of Hārūt and Mārūt in Sūrah Al-Baqarah at page 265 to 278 of Ma'ariful Qur'an vol. I.

Verses 60 - 76

فَتَوَلَّىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ، ثُمَّ أَتَىٰ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ ۚ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَىٰ ﴿٦١﴾ فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُم بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسْرُوا النَّجْوَىٰ ﴿٦٢﴾ قَالُوا إِنَّ هَٰذِهِ لَسِحْرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُم مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثْلَىٰ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَاجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ اتُّوَصَّفَا ۚ وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٤﴾ قَالُوا يُمُوسَىٰ إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقَىٰ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوَّلَ مَنْ أَلْقَىٰ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا ۚ فَإِذَا حِبالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَىٰ ﴿٦٦﴾ فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةٌ مُّوسَىٰ ﴿٦٧﴾ قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ تَلْقَفْ مَا صَنَعُوا ۖ إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سِحْرٍ ۖ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ

السِّحْرِ حَيْثُ آتَى ﴿٦٩﴾ فَأَلْقَى السَّحْرَةَ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا أَمَّا بَرِّ هُرُونَ و مُوسَى ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ أَمُنتُمْ لَهُ، قَبْلَ أَنْ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَا قِطْعَنَ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ وَلَا وَصَلَيْنَاكُمْ فِي جُدُوعِ النَّخْلِ وَلَتَعْلَمَنَّ إِنَّا أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧١﴾ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْثِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ ۖ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٧٢﴾ إِنَّا أَمَّا بَرِّبْنَا لِيُغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطِيئَتَنَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧٣﴾ إِنَّهُ، مَن يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَىٰ ﴿٧٥﴾ جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ تَجْرَىٰ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا ۚ وَذَٰلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ﴿٧٦﴾

So, the Pharaoh turned back, and put his plot together, then came. [60] Mūsā said to them, "Pity on you, do not fabricate a lie against Allah, lest He uproots you with a punishment. And loser is he who fabricates a lie." [61]

Then, they disputed among themselves in their matter and kept their talk secret. [62] Said they, "Certainly, these two are sorcerers who wish to drive you out from your land and do away with your excellent way of life. [63] So, make your plot firm and come forth in one row. And successful today is he who stands high." [64]

They said, "O Mūsā, either you throw, or shall we be the first to throw?" [65] He said, "Rather, you throw." Then, suddenly their ropes and sticks seemed to him, due to their magic, as if they were running. [66] So, Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart. [67] We said, "Do not be scared. Certainly, you are to be the upper most. [68] And throw what is in your right hand, and it will devour what they have concocted. What they have concocted is but a sleight of a magician. And the magician does not

succeed wherever he comes from." [69]

So, the magicians were led (by the truth) to fall in prostration. They said, "We have (now) believed in the Lord of Hārūn and Mūsā." [70] He (the Pharaoh) said, "You have believed in him before I permit you. He is, in fact your chief who has taught you the magic. So I will certainly cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides and will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees, and you shall know who of us is more severe in punishment, and more lasting." [71]

They said, "We will never prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us and over Him who has created us. So, do whatever you are to do. You will do only for this worldly life. [72] We have believed in our Lord, so that He forgives us from our sins and from the magic you had compelled us on. And Allah is the best and everlasting." [73]

Surely whoever comes to his Lord as a sinner, for him there is Jahannam wherein he neither dies nor lives. [74] And whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds, for such people there are the highest ranks, [75] the eternal gardens beneath which rivers flow, where they shall live for ever. And that is the reward for one who has purified himself. [76]

Commentary

The words 'فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ' (and put his plot together) in verse 60 indicate that the Pharaoh assembled his magicians and their tools. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ there were seventy two magicians but others have put their number at figures which vary from four hundred to nine hundred thousand. Their leader was a blind man whose name was Sham'un (شعرون).

Sayyidnā Mūsā's ﷺ prophetic address to the magicians

Before the start of the contest Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ addressed some words of friendly advice to the magicians to warn them of divine punishment if they persisted in denying God's miracles and other manifestations of His power. His actual words were:

وَيَلِكُمْ لَا تَقْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسْحِتْكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنِ افْتَرَى

Pity on you, do not fabricate a lie against Allah, lest He uproots you with a punishment. And loser is he who fabricates a lie - 20:61.

It was hardly to be expected that the magicians who had entered the field with all the might of the Pharaoh behind them would pay any heed to Sayyidnā Mūsā's ﷺ words of advice. However, the prophets and their followers possess a hidden power so that their plain and simple words penetrate the most unruly and perverse minds, and the address of Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ caused discord and dissensions among the magicians, some of whom thought that these could not be the words of a magician but of a higher being and were therefore, against the contest. But others were adamant, فَتَنَازَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ (then, they disputed among themselves in their matter - 20:62), وَأَسْرَوْا النَّجْوَى (and kept their talk secret - 20:62). Ultimately their unanimous decision was to proceed with the contest because, in their opinion, Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ were both magicians who wished to drive away the Pharaoh and his men from Egypt by their magic and to eradicate their ideal way of life. This decision of theirs is mentioned in verse 63 in the following words:

إِنْ هَٰذِهِنَّ لَسِحْرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكَ مِنْ أَرْضِكَ بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكَ الْمُعْلَى

Said they, "Certainly, these two are sorcerers who wish to drive you out from your land and do away with your excellent way of life. (20:63)

The word مُعْلَى is the feminine of مُعْلَى which means "most excellent". The meaning is that the Egyptians believed that their religion which regarded the Pharaoh as god was the best and Sayyidnā Mūsā ﷺ and Sayyidnā Hārūn ﷺ wanted to destroy it and supplant their own religion in its place. The word طَرِيقَهُ (translated in the text as 'way of life') is also used to describe the chiefs and leading citizens and according to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas ؓ and Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ the word has been used here in this sense namely that these two men wished to finish off all their leaders and important citizens and it was therefore, the duty of the Egyptian magicians to unite and use their best endeavours to defeat the enemy فَأَجْمِعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ اتُّوًّا صَفًّا (So, make your plot firm and forth in one row - 20:64). Formation of troops in ranks in battle has an unsettling effect on the enemy, so the Egyptian magicians arranged themselves in ranks for

the contest.

The Egyptians were confident of their success and in a mood of complacency asked Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام whether he would like to make the first move or whether they should initiate the contest. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام invited them to start the contest (Rather, you throw - 20:66) and there were several reasons for this. In the first place the Egyptians showed courage when they invited Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to open the battle and this offer called for an equally generous and chivalrous response. Secondly by making the offer the Egyptians showed their confidence in the outcome of the contest and implied as if they had already won it. On his side Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by his counter-offer, sought to convey to the Egyptians that he regarded the result of the game as a foregone conclusion in his own favour. And finally he wished to see the tricks of the Egyptians before he planned his own strategy. So, with these preliminaries over, the Egyptians cast their staffs and ropes on the ground and it appeared to the onlookers as if they had turned into snakes and were running about.

يُخَيِّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى (Their ropes and sticks seemed to him, due to their magic, as if they were running - 20:66). The verse shows that the Egyptian magicians had cast a hypnotic spell on the onlookers to whom it appeared that the staffs and the ropes had turned into snakes and were running about on the ground, whereas in fact no such transformation had taken place.

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى (So Mūsā concealed some fear in his heart - 20:67.). The sight of so many snakes crawling around evoked a sense of fear in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام which he did not reveal to anyone. Even if this fear was for his own personal safety then it can be regarded as a natural human reaction to a dangerous situation and does not conflict with the mission of prophethood. It is clear, however, that the fear which he felt was not for his own life. His apprehension was that if the immense crowd, which had assembled to see the contest, sensed that the Egyptian magicians had the upper hand then the purpose of his mission would be frustrated. These doubts and fears were dispelled when in the next verse Allah assured him لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَى (do not be scared. Certainly, you are to be the upper most - 20:68).

وَأَلْقِ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ (And throw what is in your right hand - 20:69). Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by means of a revelation (وحي) to cast down what he held in his right hand, and when he threw down his staff it turned into a huge snake and ate up all the imaginary snakes which the Egyptian magicians had produced by their magic.

Conversion to Islam and bowing in prostration by the Pharaoh's magicians

The Egyptian magicians who were masters of their art realized at once that what they had just witnessed was not magic but a miracle brought about by a Supreme Power. Consequently they fell in prostration and declared openly their faith in Allah - the God of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام. According to some traditions these magicians did not raise their heads until they had seen a glimpse of heaven and hell. (رواه عبد بن حميد وابن ابى حاتم وابن المنذر عن عكرمه - روح)

قَالَ أَمُتُّمْ لَهُ، قَبْلَ أَنْ أَذِنَ لَكُمْ (He [the Pharaoh] said, "You have believed in him before I permit you" - 20:71). The Pharaoh, thus disgraced before a vast multitude, was furious and he stormed at the magicians how they dared accept the religion brought by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام without his prior permission. He suspected that they all were Sayyidnā Mūsā's pupils who taught them the magic and had accepted defeat in connivance with him.

فَلَا قَطْعَنَ أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ (I will certainly cut apart your hands and your legs from opposite sides - 20:71). The Pharaoh thus threatened his magicians with dire punishment. He said he would cut off their hands and feet from opposite sides i.e. first the right hand, then the left foot. This apparently was the mode of inflicting punishment under the laws of the Pharaoh. وَلَأَوْصِلَنَّكُمْ فِي جُذُوعِ النَّخْلِ (And will crucify you on the trunks of palm-trees - 20:71) He also said that after cutting off their hands and feet he would crucify them on the trunks of palm-trees where they would remain suspended until they died of starvation.

قَالُوا لَنْ نُوْثِرَكَ عَلَى مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا (They said, "We will never prefer you over the clear signs that have come to us, and over Him who created us." - 20:72). The magicians, however, stood firm and did not waver in the face of the Pharaoh's threats. They told him plainly that they would not give him, nor anything he said, preference over the clear proofs and the

miracles which Allah had shown to them. Sayyidnā 'Ikrimah رضي الله عنه says that when the magicians prostrated themselves before Allah, He gave them a glimpse of the eminent places and the gifts which were to be their reward in Paradise. They confirmed their belief in the one God Who created the earth and the skies and rejected Pharaoh's claim to divinity. While neglecting the threats of the Pharaoh they further said: "So you do what you want and punish us in whatever manner you choose. And, "You can punish us as long as we live but when we die we will be out of your reach. On the other hand we are in the power of Allah both in this and after death, and His punishment is of greater concern to us".

وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ (And the magic you had compelled us on - 20:73). The magicians now accused the Pharaoh of having forced them to practice magic else they would not have taken it up. Here a question may arise that the magicians came to the contest of their own free choice and had even negotiated before hand their reward if they were victorious. How, then, could they justify their accusation that the Pharaoh had forced them to practice magic? A possible answer can be that whereas the magicians, to begin with, were tempted by promises of generous rewards for taking part in the contest they soon realized that they stood no chance against miracles and wanted to withdraw from the contest. It was then that the Pharaoh forced them to take up the challenge of Mūsā عليه السلام. Another explanation is that under a law passed by the Pharaoh everybody was compelled to learn magic.

The propitious end of 'Āsiyah, the Pharaoh's wife

Qurtubī has mentioned in his commentary that while the contest between vice and virtue was in progress, the Pharaoh's wife kept herself informed of the minute to minute developments and when she learned that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had emerged victorious, she at once declared her adherence to the True Faith. When the Pharaoh was informed of his wife's defection, he ordered that a huge rock be thrown upon her. When 'Āsiyah saw the rock coming, she raised her eyes in supplication to Allah who took away her soul so that the rock fell on her lifeless body.

Revolutionary change in the lives of the magicians

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى

Surely whoever comes to his Lord as a sinner, for him there is

Jahannam And whoever comes to Him as a believer ... for such people there are the highest ranks.... (20:74-76)

These words which refer to the Islamic beliefs and the hereafter have been spoken by the magician who only recently became Muslims and who had not yet been instructed about the principles and the obligations of the new faith.

It was the result of their brief association with Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that Allah, in an instant, revealed to them the mysteries of their new faith so that they gave scarce heed to Pharaoh's threats. Thus with the adoption of the religion of Allah they attained a state of sainthood which is given to others after long and assiduous exertions. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbas رضي الله عنه and 'Ubaid Ibn 'Umair رضي الله عنه said it was a divine marvel that the magicians who started the day as infidels became saints before it ended. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 77 - 82

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي
الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَفُ دَرَكًا وَلَا تُخْشَى ﴿٧٧﴾ فَاتَّبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ
بِجُنُودِهِ فَعَشِيَهُمْ مِّنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنُ قَوْمَهُ
وَمَا هَدَىٰ ﴿٧٩﴾ يَبْنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ قَدْ أَنْجَيْنَاكَ مِّنْ عَذَابِكُمْ
وَوَاعَدْنَاكَ الْجَانِبَ الْيَمِينِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْمَنَ وَالسَّلَٰوَىٰ
﴿٨٠﴾ كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ
غَضَبِي ۚ وَمَنْ يَحِلِّلْ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ ﴿٨١﴾ وَإِنِّي لَغَفَّارٌ
لِّمَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿٨٢﴾

And We revealed to Mūsā saying, "Move out with my servants at night, then make for them a dry path in the sea (with the strike of your staff), neither fearing to be caught up nor being scared (of anything else)." [77]

Then the Pharaoh chased them with his troops. So covered they were, by that which covered them from

the sea. [78] And the Pharaoh led his people astray and did not show them the right path. [79]

O children of Isrā'īl, We delivered you from your enemy and appointed for you the right side of the mount Ṭūr (Sinai) and sent down for you the Mann and Salwā: [80] Eat from the good things We have provided you with, and do not transgress in respect thereof, lest My wrath befalls upon you. And the one upon whom befalls My wrath certainly falls into destruction. [81]

And surely I am the Most-Forgiving for him who repents and believes and acts righteously, then takes to the right path. [82]

Commentary

The decisive defeat which he suffered in the contest between the right and wrong and between miracle and magic broke the power of the Pharaoh, and the Banī Isrā'īle stood united under the leadership of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. Allah now commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to take his men out of Egypt. But this move was full of danger. First there was the risk of pursuit by the Pharaoh, and second the river, which they had no means of crossing, barred their flight. Allah dispelled both these fears from Sayyidnā Mūsā's عليه السلام mind and told him to strike his staff on the surface of the water, and dry passageways would appear in the bed of the river over which they could all escape, thus frustrating Pharaoh's pursuit. This story has been narrated earlier under Ḥadīth ul-Futūn in this very Surah.

When the time came, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام struck the surface of water with his staff and masses of water stood asunder revealing twelve dry paths, as mentioned in Surah Ash-Shu'arā' فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ (And each part became like a big mountain- 26:63). The walls of water which divided the passages were so formed that those going on one road could see and talk to those travelling on other roads, thus imparting to them all a sense of security.

The number of the Banī Isrā'īl who fled Egypt and the strength of the Pharaoh's army

According to Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام embarked on his journey towards the Red Sea with the Banī Isrā'īl soon after sunset.

Earlier they had announced that one of their festivals was approaching which they would celebrate outside the city, and on this excuse, as well as to allay the suspicions of the Egyptians, they borrowed some jewellery from the Copts promising to return it after the festival. At that time Banī Isrā'īl numbered six hundred and three thousand, while another version puts their number at six hundred and seventy thousand. These figures, which may be exaggerated, have been taken from Isrā'īlite traditions, but one thing appears certain, namely that they were divided into twelve very populous tribes. These large numbers were also a gift from Allah because the first arrivals in Egypt in the days of Sayyidnā Yūsuf (عليه السلام) were just the twelve brothers. Now the twelve tribes of those twelve brothers which fled Egypt numbered well over six hundred thousand.

When the Pharaoh learned that the Banī Isrā'īl had taken flight, he assembled a large army of which the advance units consisted of seven hundred thousand horsemen and started off in pursuit. When the Banī Isrā'īl saw the river barring their way ahead and the Pharaoh hot on their heels, they cried out in despair. "Surely! We are caught". Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) consoled them with the words إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ (With me is my Lord indeed. He will guide me - 26:62). Then by the command of Allah he struck his staff on the water and twelve dry passageways appeared on which the twelve tribes of Banī Isrā'īl crossed over to the other side in safety. The Pharaoh who saw all this was frightened but he urged his men on by declaring that the dry paths were formed because the river stopped flowing on account of the awe which it felt in his presence. Saying so, he spurred his horse into the river ordering his army to follow him. When they were all in the middle, Allah commanded the river to resume its flow and water covered them over. (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī)

وَوَاعَدْنَاكُمْ جَانِبَ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ (And appointed for you the right side of the mount Ṭūr. (20:80)) After their deliverance from the threat of the Pharaoh, and when they were safe across the river, Allah made a promise to Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) and through him to the Banī Isrā'īl that they should move to the right side of the mount of Ṭūr so that Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) might be given the Torah and so that they might witness him speak with Allah.

وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوَى (And sent down for you the Mann and Salwā. - 20:80) This incident occurred when, having crossed the river, they were

commanded to enter a sacred city, but they refused and as punishment they were confined to a valley which is known as the valley of Tīh (Sinai). They stayed there for forty years and in spite of the punishment which they were undergoing they continued to receive gifts from Allah, and the Mann and Salwā (a special kind of food) was one such gifts which was given to them for their sustenance.

Verses 83 - 89

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَمُوسَى ﴿٨٣﴾ قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاءِ عَلَىٰ آلِيَّ
وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَىٰ ﴿٨٤﴾ قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ
بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ
أَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يَقَوْمِ أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا ۚ أَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ
الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم مَّوْعِدِي
﴿٨٦﴾ قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا حَمِلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِينَةِ
الْقَوْمِ فَقَدْ فَنَّا فَكَذَلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٧﴾ فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا
جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُم وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ ۚ فَنَسِيَ ﴿٨٨﴾ أَفَلَا
يَرَوْنَ إِلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا ۚ وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

"And what has caused you to hurry before your people, O Mūsā?" [83] He said, "Here they are just behind me, and I hurried towards You, O my Lord, so that You be pleased." [84]

He said, "We have then put your people to test after you (left them) and Sāmiri has misguided them." [85]

So, Mūsā went back to his people in anger and sorrow. He said, "O my people, did your Lord not promise you a good promise? Did then the time become too long for you, or did you wish that wrath from your Lord befalls you, and hence you backed out from the promise made to me?" [86]

They said, "We did not back out, of our own volition, of

the promise made to you, but we were burdened with loads from the ornaments of the people; so we threw them and so did throw Sāmīrī." [87] Then he brought forth for them a calf, a body with a lowing sound. Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Mūsā, and he (Mūsā) erred." [88]

Do they not then see that it does not respond to them with a word, nor does it have power to harm or benefit them? [89]

Commentary

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and the Banī Isrā'īl, having escaped the Pharaoh's wrath and having crossed the river in safety, proceeded on their journey. Soon they came upon a people who worshipped idols. They said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, "These people have adopted the idols as their gods who are visible as well as tangible. Do give us also a god whom we can see and touch." Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام replied, "إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ تَجْهَلُونَ إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ مُتَبَّرٌ" ("You are really an ignorant people. What these people are in, is sure to be destroyed; and false is what they are doing." - 78:139.)

It was then that Allah commanded Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to bring his people to the mount of Ṭūr where he would receive the Book Torah which would be a code and a policy document for all of them. However, he would have to prepare himself to receive the Torah by observing a fast for thirty days and thirty nights continuously. This period was later extended by a further ten days so that the total period of fasting was forty days and forty nights. Then Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام led his people towards the mount of Ṭūr, but in his eagerness to receive the Torah he hastened ahead so that he could complete his prayers and fasts for the prescribed period of thirty days as early as possible. He appointed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام to be his deputy during his absence. The Banī Isrā'īl continued the journey at their leisurely pace while he pushed on hoping that they would join him in due course near the mount of Ṭūr. In the meanwhile Sāmīrī, by his wiles, seduced them into adopting the calf as the object of their worship and thus divided them into three factions. This unfortunate development seriously impeded their progress towards the Ṭūr.

Allah questioned Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about his haste and the wisdom behind the question

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام appeared before Divine Presence, Allah questioned him as to why he had hastened ahead of his people. The obvious purpose of the question was to inform Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام of the mischief into which his people had fallen while he himself, unaware of what had happened in his absence, was expecting their arrival at the Ṭūr (Ibn Kathīr). On the other hand, according to Rūḥ ul-Maʿānī, the question contained an implied rebuke to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام on his haste which deprived his people of his supervision and enabled Sāmīrī to mislead them. His position as a prophet made it incumbent on him to stay with his people and keep a watchful eye on them and their activities. The learned commentator has further observed that this question implied an indication that a leader should remain behind his people when travelling with them, as Allah Taʿālā had ordered Lūṭ عليه السلام to bring his people out of the city and to remain at their back وَاتَّبِعْ أَذْيَارَهُمْ (follow them at the rear -15:65)

Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, ignorant of Sāmīrī's mischief, answered the question put to him by Allah that his haste was the result of his ardent desire to fulfill Allah's command without loss of time so as to deserve His greater favour, and that his people were close behind him and might arrive at any time. It was at that moment that Allah informed him of the evil that had befallen his people and the part played by Sāmīrī in bringing it about.

Who was Sāmīrī?

Some people have said that Sāmīrī was an Egyptian Copt who lived next door to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and had accepted the True Faith. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام took the Banī Isrāʾīl out of Egypt he also joined the exodus. Others have said that he was the chief of one of the clans of Banī Isrāʾīl called Samira which is still well-known in Syria. According to Sayyidnā Saʿid Ibn Jubair رحمته الله he was a Persian from the Kirman province. Sayyidnā Ibn ʿAbbās رضي الله عنه says that he belonged to a nation of cow-worshippers who somehow reached Egypt and pretended to join the religion of Banī Isrāʾīl whereas in actual fact he was an hypocrite (Qurtubī). Another version is that he was a Hindu from India who worshipped cows, adopted the religion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام truly, and later returned to his infidel faith, or had accepted the true faith in

hypocrisy. Sāmīrī's name, as generally believed, was Mūsā Ibn Zafar. Ibn Jarīr has related from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ that Sāmīrī was born in the year when under the orders of the Pharaoh all male Isrā'īli children were to be killed. His mother, fearing the worst, put him in the hallow of a cave and covered its mouth. She would visit him from time to time and feed him as best as she could. On the other hand Allah appointed Jibrā'īl ؑ to look after the child and provide him nourishment. Jibrā'īl ؑ brought honey on one finger, butter on the second finger and milk on the third finger which he fed to the child. He lived in the cave until he grew to manhood and, as has already been narrated above, became an unbeliever, involved the Banī Isrā'īl in a great disaster and himself suffered a terrible fate as a punishment from Allah. A poet has made a reference to this story in the following two couplets:

إذا المرء لم يخلق سعيداً تحيرت عقول مربّيه وخاب المؤمل'
فموسى الذى ربّاه جبريل كافر وموسى الذى ربّاه فرعون مرسل'

If a person is not fortunate in his birth then the minds of those who bring him up are bewildered and those who attach high hopes on him are disillusioned. Lo! The Mūsā whom Jibrā'īl brought up became an infidel and the Musa who was raised by the Pharaoh became the Prophet of Allah.

أَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًا حَسَنًا (Did your Lord not promise you a good promise? - 20:86) Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ returned to his people full of sorrow and anger. First of all he reminded them of the promise which Allah had made to them that He would give them a Book for their guidance by adhering to which they could achieve all their worldly and religious objectives. He said that it was for the purpose of receiving the Book that he had started out with them for the mount of Ṭūr.

أَفَاطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَعْدُ (Did then the time become too long for you? - 20:86) Not much time had elapsed on Allah's promise and it is inconceivable that the Banī Isrā'īl could have forgotten it, or if they remembered it, there was no reason for them to despair of its fulfillment on account of delay, thus providing for themselves justification for the worship of the calf.

أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ (Or did you wish that wrath from your Lord befalls you? - 20:86) But since neither of the two eventualities mentioned above could be contemplated, the only conclusion was that

they knowingly and of their own choice invited the wrath of Allah.

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفَنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا (They said, "We did not back out of our own volition, of the promise made to you". - 20:87) The excuse which the Banī Isrā'īl offered for adopting the worship of the calf was that they did not do so of their own choice but merely followed Sāmīrī's example.

وَلَكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ (But we were burdened with loads from the ornaments of the people. - 20:87) The word *أَوْزَارُ* (*awzār*) is the plural of *وِزْر* (*wizr*) which means "burden". On the Day of Judgment everybody will carry his bundle of sins on his shoulders just as one carries a load; therefore the sin is also termed as '*wizr*' (load). The word *زينة* means ornament and *قَوْمُ* (the people) refers to the Egyptians from whom Banī Isrā'īl had borrowed the ornaments on the pretext of wearing them on their festival day, but which they did not return to their owners and carried with them on their flight from Egypt. These ornaments have been described as *أَوْزَارُ* in the sense of "sins" because these were borrowed articles and by not returning them to their lawful owners the Banī Isrā'īl had committed a sin. From the *ḥadīth ul-futun* which has been reproduced in detail in the earlier pages it would appear that Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام warned them about their guilt and directed them to throw all the ornaments in a pit. According to some other versions it was Sāmīrī who told them that by holding on to something which did not belong to them they were committing a sin and advised them to throw all the ornaments in a pit, which they did.

When does the property of infidels become lawful for the Muslims?

The non-Muslims who live in a Muslim state and abide by its laws they are known as *Dhimmi* ذِمِّي. Such people as well as those infidels who have entered into a treaty with the Muslims remain in full control of their properties and it is not lawful for the Muslims to deprive them of any part of it. However, the properties of those infidels who are neither *Dhimmi* nor have any treaty with the Muslims, and who are described by the jurists as *كَافِرٌ حَرَبِيٌّ* (an infidel belonging to enemy country) are lawful for the Muslims.

That being so why did Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام describe the ornaments

borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl from the Egyptians as a burden, meaning sin, and ordered them to throw everything in a pit? One explanation, which a majority of commentators have given is that the properties of infidels of an enemy state carried the same status as that of spoils of war. The law governing the spoils of war before the promulgation of the Islamic code was that while the Muslims could forcibly dispossess the infidels of their properties, they were forbidden to use them for their personal benefits. All the spoils of war (مال غنيمت) thus acquired were collected and placed on a mound as offering where a fire from the sky – such as lightning - consumed them and this was a sign that Allah approved their war against the unbelievers. On the other hand if the fire did not consume offering (the spoils of war) it was considered that Allah did not approve their war so that the spoils were regarded as inauspicious and nobody ever approached them. Under the Islamic Shari'ah some of the old laws were relaxed and as a result Muslims were permitted to use the spoils of war for their own benefit. A Ḥadīth on this issue appears in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim. According to the laws, in force then, even if the ornaments borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl from the Egyptians were considered as spoils of war, those could not have been allowed for the personal benefit of Banī Isrā'īl. That is why everything was thrown into the pit under the orders of Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام.

The research conducted by Imām Muḥammad رحمه الله تعالى on this issue from a Juristic point of view is given in his book سير and its commentary by Sarakhsi. His conclusions are very weighty and closest to the truth, namely that the property of a *ḥarbī* (infidel belonging to an enemy country) cannot be treated as spoils of war in every case. In order to be so treated, and thereby become lawful for the Muslims, it must have been acquired by sword in the course of a proper religious war (*jihād*). On the other hand the property of a *ḥarbī* (a citizen of an enemy state) which has been acquired otherwise than in a religious war cannot be treated as spoils of war. Such properties are however termed as فئى (*fai'*) which can be used lawfully by the Muslims only with the consent of the owner. Taxes imposed by an Islamic state and paid by the infidels voluntarily fall in the definition of *fai'* and their use is permissible even though they have not been acquired in the course of a religious war.

The ornaments borrowed by the Banī Isrā'īl did not fall in either of

these two categories. They could not be described as *fai'* because they were borrowed from the Egyptians who did not transfer their ownership to Banī Isrā'īl, nor could they be considered as spoils of war because they were not taken in the course of a religious war. Thus according to the Islamic Shari'ah the Banī Isrā'īl could not have lawfully used the ornaments for their personal benefit.

It is well-known that when the Holy Prophet ﷺ decided to migrate to Madīnah, he had with him many valuables which the infidels of Arabia had entrusted to him for safe custody because they had full faith in his honesty and integrity and had, in recognition of these qualities, bestowed upon him the title of Amīn (أَمِين - honest). He was so solicitous about these deposits that he placed them in the hands of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؑ and specifically directed him to restore them to their rightful owners before migrating to Madīnah. This clearly shows that it is not lawful for Muslims to appropriate, for their personal use, the valuables belonging to non-Muslims.

The word فَكَذَّبْنَاهَا - means, "we cast away the ornaments". According to the *ḥadīth-ul-futūn* (narrated earlier in detail) this was done under the orders of Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ while some other versions say that Sāmīrī cajoled the Banī Isrā'īl into throwing the ornaments in the pit. It is quite possible that both these versions are true (as appears below).

فَكَذَّبَكَ الْقَى السَّامِرِى (So did throw Sāmīrī - 20:87) It appears from the *ḥadīth-ul-futūn* related by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Abbās ؑ (reported in earlier pages) that after the Banī Isrā'īl had thrown away all the ornaments, Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ ordered a big fire to be lit in the pit which melted them and left them in one solid piece. The decision as to the disposal of this precious metal was deferred till the return of Sayyidnā Mūsā ؑ. After all this had happened Sāmīrī approached Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ. He had something in his closed fists and sought permission to throw it in the pit. Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ thinking that he held some ornaments in his fists permitted him to cast them in the pit. Then Sāmīrī said, "I will certainly throw it, but first I want you to pray to God that a wish which I have may be granted." Sayyidnā Hārūn ؑ, unaware of the evil which he planned, prayed to Allah in his behalf, and Sāmīrī opened his hands and threw what he held in the pit. It was not

ornaments but only dust from under the hoof marks of the horse of Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) which Sāmīrī had collected after he observed that signs of life appeared in the dust under the hoof marks of the horse. Aided by Satan he now wished to put life into a calf by means of this dust. Nevertheless, whether it was the result of the miraculous property of the dust or whether it was a consequence of the prayer of Sayyidnā Hārūn (عليه السلام) in behalf of Sāmīrī, the molten lump of gold and silver assumed the form of a calf and started making bovine sounds. There are other traditions also which relate that it was Sāmīrī himself who persuaded the Banī Isrā'īl to throw the ornaments in the pit after which he carved the molten metal in the shape of a calf which had no life. He then sprinkled on it the dust from the hoof marks of the mount of Sayyidnā Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) and it became a living calf. All these and similar stories which are based on Isrā'īlite traditions have been related by Qurṭubī in his commentary and by other writers as well. These traditions cannot be wholly relied upon, yet at the same time we do not possess sufficient ground to disprove them either.

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خَوَارٌ (So he brought forth for them a calf, a body with a lowing sound. - 20:88) Some Commentators maintain that it was only a body without life and that the sound was produced by a special contrivance. But the majority of commentators believe that the calf in fact possessed signs of life.

فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ (Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Mūsā, and he erred." - 20:88) Having carved a calf which could also produce a sound, Sāmīrī and his friends said to the Banī Isrā'īl, "Here is your god and the god of Mūsā. It seems Musa has forgotten, that is why he has gone elsewhere in search of god".

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا (Do they not then see that it does not respond to them with a word, nor does it have power to harm or benefit them? - 20:89) The excuses put forward by the Banī Isrā'īl before Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) for the evil deeds end with the previous verse. In this verse Allah reminds them of their folly by pointing out to them that even if the calf had life and made bovine noises would that be sufficient reason to adopt it as the object of their worship? They were well aware that it could not answer their prayers nor had it the power to harm them or to benefit them.

Verses 90 - 94

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَقَوْمُ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ ۖ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ
الرَّحْمَنُ فَاتَّبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي ﴿٩٠﴾ قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ
عَظِيمِينَ حَتَّى يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَى ﴿٩١﴾ قَالَ يَهْرُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ
رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ﴿٩٢﴾ أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ۖ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ﴿٩٣﴾ قَالَ يَا بَنُوؤُمَّ
لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي ۚ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي
إِسْرَءِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ﴿٩٤﴾

And Hārūn had already said to them, "O my people, you have only been led astray with it, and your Lord is the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So follow me and obey my command." [90] They said, "We will never discontinue staying with it, until Mūsā returns to us." [91] He (Mūsā) said, "O Hārūn what did prevent you from following me when you saw them going astray? [92] Did you then disobey my command?" [93] He said, "O son of my mother, do not hold me by my beard, nor by my head. I feared that you would say, 'You have caused discord among the children of Isrā'īl and did not observe my advice.'" [94]

Commentary

When the Banī Isrā'īl were smitten with the mischief of calf-worship Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام as the deputy of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام remonstrated with them but to no avail. They split into three factions. Those who remained loyal to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام and refused to be misled by Sāmīrī and who numbered, according to Qurṭubī, twelve thousand. The second faction adopted calf-worship with the reservation that if Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, on his return, forbade them they would give it up. The third faction consisted of zealots who believed that Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would approve of their action and would himself join them in calf-worship but even if he did not, they themselves would never give up their new faith. When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned to his people he rebuked them for the mischief they had caused (as related in the earlier

verses). Then he turned to Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام and in a rage seized him by his beard and the hair of his head. He asked him that when the unbelief (كفر) of the Banī Isrā'īl had become obvious, why he did not follow him to the Ṭūr mountain and why he disobeyed his orders.

مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ (What did prevent you from following me when you saw them going astray. - 20:92) One meaning of *ittibā'* (following) referred to in this verse is that when Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام discovered that the Banī Isrā'īl had strayed from the righteous path, and were beyond recall, he should have abandoned them and joined Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at the Ṭūr mountain. The other meaning of the word 'follow', as adopted by some commentators is that when the Banī Isrā'īl had forsaken the True Faith, Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام should have fought them as Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would have done had he been present there. In any case Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام blamed Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام that he should either have fought the Banī Isrā'īl or should have parted company with them and joined Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام at the Ṭūr mountain, and that his continuing to live with them was an unwise act. Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام addressed him as يَا ابْنَ أُمِّ (O my mother's son!) which implied a plea not to judge him too harshly. His excuse was that if he had fought the Banī Isrā'īl or abandoned them with his twelve thousand men, it would have caused discord and strife among them. He said that he had understood the parting advice of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام أَخْلَفْنِي فِي قَوْمِي وَأَصْلِحْ (Take my place among my people and keep things right - 7:142) to mean that he should maintain harmony among the people and prevent differences at all cost. Besides, he said, he had hoped that when he (Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام) would return, he would be able to handle the situation satisfactorily. A further excuse which he offered and which is reported elsewhere in the Qur'ān was إِنَّ الْقَوْمَ اسْتَضَعُّوْنِي وَكَادُوا يَقْتُلُونَنِي (7:150) which means that the Banī Isrā'īl have taken me as weak because of the small number of my supporters and were about to kill me. Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام did not press the matter any further with his brother. He then turned to Sāmīrī and asked him to explain his conduct in this whole affair. Qur'ān does not indicate whether he accepted the excuses offered by Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام or whether he considered the latter's mistake as one of *ijtihād* (assessment) and dropped the matter.

Differences between two prophets when the opinions of both could be right

In this affair the considered opinion of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by way of *ijtihad* was that in the situation as it took shape Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام should have totally dissociated himself from the Banī Isrā'īl by removing himself and his followers from their company, and that by continuing to stay with them he had compromised his position. On the other hand Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام felt, by way of *ijtihad*, that such an action would have caused a permanent split among the Banī Isrā'īl and divided them into factions, and since there was hope that they would see the error of their way when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام returned, he thought it wise to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards them. The purpose of both the prophets was a strict adherence to the commands of Allah and to ensure that the Banī Isrā'īl remained steadfast in the observance of the True Faith and in their belief in the Oneness of Allah. Where they differed, however, was the manner in which these objectives could be achieved whether to make a complete break with the dissidents or to bear with them in the hope that things would improve ultimately. Both these views have merit and it is not possible to pass a firm and final judgment on them. The differences among the jurists based on *ijtihad* are of a similar nature and those holding different opinions cannot be charged of having broken any religious laws. As regards Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام seizing his brother by the hairs, it only shows his anger and frustration with the situation which had developed during his absence, but on hearing his explanation, he prayed to Allah to forgive them both.

Verses 95 - 98

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يُسَامِرِي ﴿٩٥﴾ قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ
فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي
﴿٩٦﴾ قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۚ وَإِنَّ
لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّنْ تُخْلَفَهُ ۚ وَانْظُرْ إِلَى إِلْهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا
لَّنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ۖ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ ۖ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿٩٧﴾ إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا

إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿٩٨﴾

He (Mūsā) said, "What then is your case, O Sāmīrī?" [95]
He said, "I perceived something they perceived not. So I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger (the angel). Then, I cast it. And thus my inner self tempted me." [96]

He (Mūsā) said, "Then go away, for your fate in this life is to say: 'Do not touch me'. And, of course, you have another promise, never to be held back from you. And look at your god to which you stayed devoted. We will certainly burn it, then we will scatter it thoroughly in the sea. [97] Your God is Allah other than whom there is no god. He encompasses everything with knowledge." [98]

Commentary

بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ (I perceived something they perceived not - 20:96)
The reference here is to Jibrā'il عليه السلام. There is a tradition that he was present on his horse at the river crossing when, the Banī Isrā'īl having crossed it safely to the other side, the Pharaoh and his army entered the river in pursuit of the fugitives. There is another tradition that after Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام had crossed the river Sayyidnā Jibrā'il عليه السلام came to him riding a horse to invite him to go to the Ṭūr mountain. At that time Sāmīrī alone, and no one else, saw him and the reason, according to a tradition of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه, was that he was nourished by Jibrā'il when his mother had left him in the cave, and knew him well.
(Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ الرَّسُولِ (So I picked up a handful of dust from under the foot of the messenger.- 20:96) The word رَسُول (messenger) refers to Jibrā'il عليه السلام. The Satan planted the idea in the heart of Sāmīrī that the earth under the hoofs of the mount of Jibrā'il عليه السلام must somehow contain signs of life and he should pick up some of it - which he did. According to the tradition of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه

القي في روعه أنه لا يليقها على شيء فيقول كن كذا، إلا كان

(The thought occurred to Sāmīrī was that if he sprinkled this earth on something and uttered the words, "You become so and so", it will change its original form and become "so and so.")

It is also related by some exegetes that Sāmīrī observed that grass sprouted unfailingly in the earth under the hoofs of the horse of Jibra'īl (عليه السلام) from which he deduced that it contained traces of life. (كذا في الكمالين). The same explanation is adopted by Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Tabī'in and majority of commentators, and it includes comments on doubts expressed by some skeptics فجزأه الله خير الجزاء. (Bayān ul-Qur'ān)

Later on he moulded the ornaments, which the Banī Isrā'īl had thrown in the pit, in the shape of a calf and sprinkled the earth on it. By a miracle of Allah it developed signs of life and could even make a sound. The detailed story of Sāmīrī and his calf has been given in (*ḥadīth ul-futūn*) in earlier pages of this volume.

فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ

For your fate in this life is to say: 'Do not touch me'. - 20:97

The punishment proposed by Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) for Sāmīrī in this world was that everyone should sever all contacts with him and not to come near him, and he too was commanded not to touch anyone. Thus he was condemned to spend the rest of his life away from all social contacts - like a wild animal. Whether this punishment was awarded to him by Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) by means of a law which was binding on Sāmīrī as well as on the Banī Isrā'īl, or whether Sāmīrī was smitten by some peculiar affliction which deterred people from making any physical contact with him, is not known. Some traditions have it that Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) had laid a curse on Sāmīrī so that if anyone touched him then both the parties came down with fever (Ma'alim). Thus he spent all his life hiding from people and whenever he saw someone approaching him, he would call out لَا مِسَاسَ (Don't touch me). It is mentioned in Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī on the authority of Al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ that initially Sayyidnā Mūsā (عليه السلام) had intended to execute Sāmīrī but Allah stopped him because Sāmīrī was a very generous person and helped people who were in distress.

The word نَحْرَقْنَاهُ means "we will certainly burn it". Here the question arises: how could the calf which was carved from gold and silver be burnt, because these metals when subjected to extreme heat are melted but are not reduced to ashes. Several possibilities have been advanced. The first is that after signs of life appeared in it, the calf ceased to be a figure of gold

and silver and became an animal of flesh and blood in which case it could be slaughtered and burnt. The second explanation is that it could be filed with a rasp into very minute particles of dust (Ad- Dur al-Manthūr). A third explanation is that it could be burnt by means of some chemical device (Rūḥ ul-Ma'ānī). There is yet a fourth explanation, namely that the calf could be burnt by some miracle (Bayān ul-Qur'ān).

Verses 99 - 114

كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ ۚ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا
ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾ مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وِزْرًا ﴿١٠٠﴾
خَلِيدَيْنِ فِيهِ ۖ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾ يَوْمَ يُنفَخُ فِي
الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا ﴿١٠٢﴾ يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ
لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ
طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ
يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾ فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾ لَا تَرَى فِيهَا
عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ ۚ وَ
خَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا
تَنفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾ يَعْلَمُ
مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾ وَعَنْتِ
الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ ۖ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا ﴿١١١﴾ وَمَنْ
يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخَفُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا
﴿١١٢﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ
يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحْدِثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا ﴿١١٣﴾ فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ وَلَا
تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ ۚ وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي

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Thus We narrate to you certain events of what has passed, and We have given to you, from Ourselves, a (book of) advice. [99] Whoever turns away from it shall certainly bear a heavy burden on the Doomsday, [100] all such people living under it forever. And how evil for them is that burden on the Doomsday! [101] The Day when the Horn (Ṣūr) will be blown and We shall gather them together that day, while turned blue, [102] whispering among themselves, "You did not remain (in graves) more than ten (days)". [103] We very well know what they say, when the best of them in his ways will say, "You did not remain more than a day." [104]

And they ask you about the mountains. So, you say, "My Lord will blow them up totally (as dust), [105] then will turn them into a levelled plain [106] in which you will see neither a curve nor a mound. [107]

That day they will follow the caller, having no crookedness. And the voices will turn low in awe for the Raḥmān (All-Merciful). So, you will hear not but whispering. [108]

That day no intercession will be of any use to anyone, except the one whom the Raḥmān (All-Merciful) has permitted and was pleased with his word. [109] He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them, and they do not encompass Him in (their) knowledge. [110]

And all faces will be humbled before the Ever-Alive, the All-Sustaining. And the loser is the one who bears (the burden of his) transgression. [111] And whoever does acts from righteous deeds, while he is a believer, shall fear neither injustice nor curtailment (of his rewards). [112]

And in this way We have sent it down to you, an Arabic Qur'ān, and have detailed therein some warnings repeatedly, so that they may be fearful or it may produce a lesson for them. [113] So High above all is Allah, the King, the True.

And do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'an before its revelation to you is concluded, and say, "My Lord, improve me in knowledge." [114]

Commentary

وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا (And We have given to you, from Ourselves, a (book of) advice. - 20:99) According to a majority of commentators the word ذِكْر (advice) in the present context means the Qur'an.

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وِزْرًا (Whoever turns away from it shall certainly bear a heavy burden on the Doomsday - 20:100) Turning aside from the Qur'an can take different forms: not paying proper attention and respect when it is being recited; showing scant desire to learn to read it or to comprehend its meaning, or reading it incorrectly without regard to correct pronunciation etc.; reading it without full concentration; reading it not to win God's goodwill but to attain worldly rewards such as wealth and fame. Likewise not striving to comprehend the laws laid down by the Qur'an or, having understood them, not complying with them or acting in their defiance are extreme forms of disregard for the Qur'an. Any neglect of the rights and claims of the Qur'an is a great sin and the guilty person will bear it on his head on the Day of Judgment in the shape of a heavy load. It has been related in several traditions that the evil deeds and the sins which a person has committed in his life time will be placed on his head in the shape of a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection.

يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ (The Day when the Horn [Sūr] will be blown - 20:102) According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضي الله عنه, a Bedouin asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about صُور (the Horn) to which he replied that it is something like a horn which will be blown, meaning thereby that when the angel will blow into it all those who had lain dead for centuries will return to life. Only Allah knows the true nature of the Sūr (the Horn).

وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَى إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ (And do not hasten with (reciting) the Qur'an before its revelation is concluded - 20: 114.) It has been stated in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضي الله عنه that in the early days of revelation when angel Jibra'il عليه السلام brought a Qur'ānic verse and recited it to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the latter would try to repeat it after him, lest it escapes from his memory. He had, thus, to make a double effort, i.e. to listen to and understand the meaning of the Qur'ānic verses

while they were being recited by Jibra'il عليه السلام and also to repeat them in order to commit them to memory. In this verse as well as in the verse occurring in Surah Qiyāma (75:16) Allah lightened this burden from the Holy Prophet ﷺ by assuring him that he need not worry himself about memorizing the Qur'ānic verses which were revealed to him because He (Allah) would make it possible for him to remember them without any effort on his part. All that he was directed to do was that he should keep praying, رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا (My Lord, improve me in knowledge). This comprehensive prayer includes a plea for memorizing that portion of the Qur'an which had already been revealed to him and a desire for what remained of it and for the ability to understand its true meaning.

Verses 115 - 127

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾ وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ طَٰغَىٰ أَبَىٰ ﴿١١٦﴾ فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَىٰ ﴿١١٧﴾ إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ ﴿١١٨﴾ وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَىٰ ﴿١١٩﴾ فَوَسَّوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ شَجَرَةِ الْخُلْدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَّا يَبْلَىٰ ﴿١٢٠﴾ فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْآتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفْنَ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ وَعَصَىٰ آدَمُ رَبَّهُ، فَغَوَىٰ ﴿١٢١﴾ ثُمَّ اجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ، فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ ﴿١٢٢﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا، بَعْضُكُم لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۖ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُم مِّنِّي هُدًى ۖ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَىٰ ﴿١٢٣﴾ وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ، مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ، يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ أَعْمَىٰ ﴿١٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَىٰ وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾ قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسَىٰ ﴿١٢٦﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي

مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَى

﴿١٢٧﴾

And earlier We had given a directive to 'Ādam, then he forgot, and We did not find in him a firm resolve. [115]

And when We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam". So, they prostrated, all but Iblīs who refused. [116] So, We said "O 'Ādam, this is an enemy to you and to your wife. So let him not expel you from Paradise, lest you get into trouble. [117] Here you are privileged that you will not be hungry nor will you be unclad, [118] and you will not be thirsty, nor will you be exposed to sun." [119]

Then the Satan instigated him. He said, "O 'Ādam, shall I guide you to the tree of eternity and to an empire that does not decay?" [120]

So, both of them ('Ādam and Eve) ate from it, and their parts of shame were exposed to them, and they started stitching on themselves some of the leaves of Paradise. And 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord, and erred. [121] Thereafter his Lord chose him. So He accepted his repentance and gave (him) guidance. [122] He said, "(O 'Ādam and Eve) Go down from here, all of you, some of you enemies of some. Then, should some guidance come to you from Me, the one who follows My guidance shall not go astray, nor shall he be in trouble. [123] And whoever turns away from My message shall have a straitened life, and We shall raise him blind on the Day of Judgment." [124] He will say, "My Lord, why did you raise me blind while I was sighted?" [125] He will say, "Like this Our signs came to you and you had ignored them. And in the same way you will be ignored today." [126]

And thus We recompense him who exceeds the limits and does not believe in the signs of his Lord. And certainly the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe and more lasting. [127]

Commentary

And now we come to the story of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام which has

been related earlier in Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Al-A'rāf and partly in Sūrah Hījr and Al-Kahf, and will also appear later in Sūrah Ṣād. The link of the story with the preceding verses has been variously explained by the commentators. The most obvious of these explanations is the one which refers to an earlier verse كَذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ (Thus We narrate to you certain events of what has passed- 20:99) in which Allah informed the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the stories of the past prophets were revealed to him as evidence and confirmation of his own prophethood and in order that his own followers be warned against committing the sins for which the earlier generations were punished. The first, and in some ways, the most instructive story was that of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام in which there was a clear warning for the followers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that Satan was an old enemy of mankind who by his flattery and show of sympathy tricked Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام into committing an error for which both he and his wife were expelled from Paradise and the clothes which they wore there were taken away from them. Later their prayer for forgiveness was accepted by Allah and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was elevated to the status of prophethood.

وَلَقَدْ عَهِدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِنْ قَبْلِ فَنَسَىٰ وَلَمْ نُجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا (And earlier We had given a directive to 'Ādam, then he forgot, and We did not find in him a firm resolve. - 20:115) Here the word عَهِدْنَا has been used in the sense of أَمَرْنَا or وَصَّيْنَا (Al-Bahr ul-Muḥīṭ), and the meaning of the verse is that long before the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ Allah had assigned a particular tree and enjoined upon Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to shun it and not to eat any yield from it, and that barring this tree and its yields he was free to use the fruits of all the trees and all the other gifts from Allah which were abundantly available in Paradise. And, as will follow, he was also warned that the Satan was his enemy against whose wiles he must at all times remain on his guard and that any lapse on his part would land him in serious trouble. But he forgot and was found wanting in resolution. Here two words have been used, namely نَسِيَان (nisyān) which means to forget or to be unmindful, the other word is عَزَمَ ('azm) which means to be resolute in the performance of some task. In order to fully comprehend the meanings of these two words it is well to bear in mind that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was one of those prophets who were endowed by Allah with constancy and determination, and that prophets, by virtue of their status

are infallible.

The first word suggests that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was overtaken by نِسْيَان (forgetting) and since forgetting something is beyond one's control and volition it does not constitute sin. There is a Ḥadīth which says رَفَعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِي الْخَطَا وَالنَّسْيَانَ (My followers will not be held liable for mistakes and unmindfulness). Then there is the general pronouncement in the Qur'ān لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - 2:286). At the same time it has to be remembered that there are ways and means which if adopted will prevent people from forgetting things. And since the prophets stand high in the favour of Allah a special responsibility rests upon them to adopt such ways and means to avoid even mistakes and refrain even from forgetting something, therefore, they may well be held liable for not using the means which were available to them in order to avoid forgetfulness. The well known Ṣūfī Junaid Al-Baghdadi رحمه الله تعالى has expressed this idea in the following words حَسَنَاتِ الْإِبْرَارِ سَيِّئَاتُ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ (The good deeds of ordinary virtuous men are often regarded as sinful and evil when performed by those who stand high in Allah's favour).

The episode under reference occurred before Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was granted prophethood and according to some Sunni Scholars sins committed in the prior period do not militate against the concept of the prophet's immunity from sin. Also it was a case of forgetfulness which cannot be considered as a sin, but in view of the high position of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام as a prophet of Allah this too was regarded as a lapse for which he was admonished and as a warning to him his lapse was described as عِصْيَان (Disobedience).

The second word is 'azm (firm resolve) and the same verse says that Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was found wanting in 'azm. As a matter of fact he was fully determined to comply with the commands of Allah but the intrigues of Satan weakened his resolve and unmindfulness made him lose his grip on it.

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ (And when We said to angels - 20:116) Here is a brief mention of the command which, after the creation of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام, Allah gave to all the angels including Iblīs (Satan) who at that time lived in the Paradise with them, to prostrate to him. All the angels obeyed

but Satan refused. In his haughtiness he claimed that he was made of fire while Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was made of clay, and fire being superior to clay, he could not be expected to prostrate to the latter. As a punishment for his arrogance and defiance of the command of Allah he was accursed and driven from Paradise while all the gates of Paradise were opened wide for Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام to enjoy the fruits of its gardens and all the blessings of Allah at their will. However, there was one particular tree which they were told to shun in all circumstances and never to partake of any of its produce. This story has been related in Sūrah Al-Baqarah and Al-A'rāf. Instead of repeating it here, Allah has mentioned his directives given to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام to comply with His commands to the fullest extent. Referring to the rebellious conduct of Satan He reminds Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that the former is his enemy and that both he himself and his wife should at all times be on their guard against his deceptions. But if they succumbed to his tricks and became heedless of the commands of Allah then they would be expelled from Paradise and face distress (فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى). The word تَشْقَى (*tashqā*) is derived from شَقَاوَةٌ (*shaqāwah*) which has two meanings namely distress or trouble in the Hereafter and distress in this world. Here the word has obviously been used in the second meaning because it cannot be used in its first meaning even for pious Muslims, leave alone the prophets. Commentators have explained this word in the sentence هُوَ إِنْ يَأْكُلْ مِنْ كَدِّ يَدَيْهِ (He will have to earn his living by the labour of his hands). (Qurtubī) In the present context the second meaning of the word appears more appropriate because in the following verse reference has been made to the four basic needs of human life, namely food, water, clothes and shelter which are freely available in Paradise without any effort and toil. This verse also contains a hint to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that if he ever was expelled from Paradise, He would forfeit all these gifts. It is worth noting that here only those gifts have been mentioned which are basic to human life, to the exclusion of the other major rewards and comforts which are available in Paradise and the intention is to warn Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that one wrong step would deprive him of all these benefits, which he would have to earn for himself with physical labour and by the sweat of his brow. Most commentators have adopted this very meaning of the word فَتَشْقَى. (lest you get into trouble) Imām Qurtubī رحمه الله تعالى has also recorded that when Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام came down to

the earth, Jibra'īl عليه السلام gave him some grains of wheat and rice and taught him how to plant the seeds, harvest the ripe crop, grind the grain and prepare bread from it. Finally when all the stages were completed and Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام sat down to eat, the bread slipped out of his hand and rolled down the hill. Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام went after it and retrieved it with great exertion. Thereupon Jibra'īl عليه السلام told Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that on the earth he and his descendants would have to work very hard in order to earn their livelihood. (Qurṭubī)

The responsibility for providing the essential needs of a wife rests on her husband

Early in this verse when Allah spoke to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام He included Sayyidah Ḥawwā' also in His address عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجُكُمَا مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ (Satan is your enemy and the enemy of your wife. So you both must be very careful so let him not expel you from Paradise - 20:117). But towards the end of the verse word فَتَشْقَى (lest you get into trouble) is used in the singular and not in dual form. From this Imām Qurṭubī has deduced the rule that a husband is responsible for meeting the essential needs of his wife and that any physical labour which is necessary to meet that responsibility must be provided by the husband alone. The use of the word فَتَشْقَى in second person singular is a pointer to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام that if they were sent to the earth the onus of earning a livelihood for himself and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام will fall on him alone.

Only four things fall within the definition of obligatory maintenance.

Qurṭubī says that this verse clearly indicates that there are four things only which a husband must provide for his wife namely food, water, clothes and shelter. Anything else which he gives her will be regarded as gift, but is not binding on him. From this it has also been deduced that wherever Islamic law makes a person responsible for the maintenance of somebody else (such as sick and needy parents whose maintenance is the responsibility of the children), it is obligatory on him to provide only these four things.

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَى (Here you are privileged that you will not be hungry nor will you be unclad, and you will not be thirsty, nor will you be exposed to sun - 118, 119.) Four things needed for the existence of life will

be provided in Paradise without asking or putting in any labour. One should not doubt that good taste of food will not be enjoyed because of the absence of hunger in Paradise. Similarly, it is incorrect to assume that one would not enjoy drinking cold water in Paradise because of lack of thirst. The reality is that hunger and thirst would not be felt in Paradise to the extent of feeling any difficulty. The food will be made available as and when one would desire, and the cold water will be provided immediately when one would like to drink. In fact everything will be provided the moment one would desire.

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ (الى قوله) وَعَصَىٰ أَدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَىٰ (Then the Satan instigated him... And 'Ādam disobeyed his Lord and erred - 120, 121.) Here it is pertinent to ask that when Allah had specifically told Sayyidnā 'Ādam (عليه السلام) and Sayyidah Ḥawwā' عليها السلام to abstain from a particular tree or to eat any part of its yield, and had also warned them to beware of Satan's machinations who was their sworn enemy who would do his best to seduce them and thus cause their expulsion from Paradise, why then, despite all the warnings and admonitions, did Sayyidnā 'Ādam (عليه السلام) let himself fall into the trap laid out for him by the Satan. His action clearly constituted disobedience of the commands of Allah and were, therefore, acts of sin. There is consensus among scholars that the prophets of Allah are immune from all sins - minor or major, and Sayyidnā 'Ādam (عليه السلام) was a prophet of Allah! So how may one explain his action of eating the fruit of the forbidden tree when Allah had warned him in such clear terms? An answer to all these questions will be found in the commentary of Sūrah Al-Baqarah which also explains the use of the words عَصَىٰ (to disobey) and غَوَىٰ (to err) in reference to Sayyidnā 'Ādam (عليه السلام). According to the divine Islamic law the action of Sayyidnā 'Ādam (عليه السلام) did not constitute a sin but because he was a prophet of Allah and in His high favour therefore this minor lapse on his part has been described as عَصِيَان (disobedience) for which he was admonished by Allah. A further point here is that the word غَوَىٰ has two meanings: One is "to be deprived" and the other is "to err", or "to go astray". Al-Qushairi and Al-Qurtubī have adopted the first meaning of the word and have explained this verse by saying that as a punishment for his lapse Sayyidnā 'Ādam (عليه السلام) was deprived of the comforts which were available to him in the Paradise and as a result his life became harsh and bitter.

It is incumbent on Muslims to show reverence to the prophets of Allah when referring to them

Qāḍī Abū Bakr Ibn Al-‘Arabi رحمه الله تعالى when discussing the word عَصَى (disobeyed) etc. in reference to Sayyidnā ‘Ādam عليه السلام in his book Aḥkām-ul-Qur’ān has made an important observation which is reproduced below in his own words:

لا يجوز لاحدنا اليوم ان يخبر بذلك عن ادم الا اذا ذكرناه في اثناء قوله تعالى عنه
او قول نبيه، فاما ان يتدعى ذلك من قبل نفسه فليس بجائز لنا في ابائنا الادين الينا
المماثلين لنا فكيف في ابينا الاقدم الاعظم الاكرم النبي المقدم الذي عذره الله
سبحانه وتعالى وتاب عليه وغفرله (تفسير قرطبي و ذكره في البحر المحيط ايضا)

Today it is not permissible for any of us to use the word عَصِيَان (disobedience) in relation to Sayyidnā ‘Ādam عليه السلام except when it has been used with reference to this verse or to a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. When indeed it is not desirable to use this word in relation to our own not-too-distant ancestors, who were like us, how can it be permissible in relation to Sayyidnā ‘Ādam عليه السلام who is the father of all mankind and more deserving of respect than our own ancestors? Besides he is a revered prophet of Allah whose excuse He accepted and forgave him for his lapse. For such a person the use of the word عصيان (disobedience) is totally forbidden.

The same views have been expressed by Qushairi Abū Naṣr.

The words اٰمِطًا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا (123) mean "both of you go down together". This command can be in reference to Sayyidnā ‘Ādam عليه السلام and the Satan in which case the meaning of the phrase بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ (some of you enemies of some - 123) is obvious, namely that the two of them will remain enemies in the world also. However if it is argued that the Satan had already been expelled from Paradise long before these events occurred, then it would be correct to assume that these words have been addressed to Sayyidnā ‘Ādam عليه السلام and Sayyidah Ḥawwā عليها السلام meaning thereby that their children would cherish hostile feelings towards one another and mutual hostility among the children embitters the lives of the parents.

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ دُرِّي (And whoever turns away from My message - 20:124.) Here the word can refer both to the Qur’ān and the Holy Prophet ﷺ as has been mentioned in other verses دُرِّ رَسُولًا (65:10). In both cases the

meaning would be that if anyone fails in his duty to recite the Qur'ān or to comply with its commands, or if he fails to submit to the authority of the Holy Prophet ﷺ then as punishment he would be condemned to a harsh and rigorous life in this world and would be raised blind on the Day of Resurrection.

The truth about the life of infidels and evil-doers being harsh in this world

Here one may ask that a life of penury and destitution in this world is not for the infidels and wicked people only but it afflicts good and pious people also. Indeed the prophets of Allah ﷺ have to endure the greatest misfortunes and calamities in their worldly life. Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī and all other books of Ḥadīth contain a tradition in which, on the authority of Sa'd and others, the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that the severest trials and tribulations are suffered by the prophets and in the case of the pious people those who enjoy a higher rank in the hierarchy are the ones who will get a greater share of misfortunes. On the other hand the infidels and the evildoers enjoy a life of comfort and affluence. Therefore the words of the Qur'ān that such people would be condemned to a harsh and rigorous life can refer to the life in the Hereafter (آخرة) only, because experience shows that they have, in this world, all the comforts of life.

The answer to the question posed above is that the punishment which the evil-doers will suffer in this world refers to the chastisement which awaits them in the grave where their existence will be made miserable and beyond endurance. Their graves will be their abodes and will squeeze them so tight that their graves will crack. There is a tradition in Musnād al-Bazzār on the authority of Sayyidnā Abu Hurairah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself stated that the words مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا (straitened life) occurring in this verse (124) refer to the existence in the grave. (Maḥzarī)

Another interpretation given to these words by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubair is that these people will be deprived of the gift of contentment which will result in an overpowering greed for worldly goods (Maḥzarī) but no amount of wealth will ever give them peace and content. The constant desire to augment their worldly possessions and the fear of any decrease in their size will always keep them anxious and uneasy. It

is generally observed that the wealthy people who have all the means of comfort at their disposal actually are unable to enjoy comfort themselves, because comfort cannot be achieved without content and peace of mind.

Verses 128 - 135

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْجِدِهِمْ
 إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿١٢٨﴾ وَلَوْ لَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ
 رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ﴿١٢٩﴾ فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَ
 سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا ۖ وَمِنْ آنَاءِ
 اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾ وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ
 إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ ۖ
 وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٣١﴾ وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ
 عَلَيْهَا ۖ لَا تَسْأَلْكَ رِزْقًا ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ ۖ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ﴿١٣٢﴾ وَ
 قَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّهِ ۖ أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِم بَيِّنَةٌ مَا فِي الصُّحُفِ
 الْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٣٣﴾ وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا
 أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَذِلَّ وَنَخْزَىٰ ﴿١٣٤﴾
 قُلْ كُلُّ مُتَرَبِّصٍ فَتَرَبَّصُوا ۚ فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ
 السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ ﴿١٣٥﴾

Did it give them no guidance, as to how many generations We have destroyed before them who used to walk in their dwellings? Surely, in this there are signs for the people of understanding. [128] And had there not been a word from your Lord that had come earlier, and an appointed time, it (the punishment) would have been inevitable. [129]

So, (O messenger) endure what they say and proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord before the sun rises

and before it sets. And in some hours of night proclaim His purity, as well as at the edges of the day, so that you may be pleased. [130]

And never stretch your eyes towards what we have given to groups of them to enjoy, the glamor of the worldly life, so that We put them to test thereby. And the bounty of your Lord is better and lasting. [131]

And bid your family to perform Ṣalāh and adhere to it yourself. We ask no provision from you. We give provision to you. And the end is in favour of Taqwā. [132]

And they said, "Why does he not bring to us sign from his Lord?" Has there not come to them the manifestation of that which was contained in the earlier scriptures? [133] And if We had destroyed them with a punishment before it, they would have said, "Our Lord, why did you not send a messenger to us, so that we might have followed Your signs before we were humiliated and put to disgrace?" [134]

Say, "Everyone is waiting. So wait, then you will know who are the people of the straight path and who has guidance. [135]

Commentary

The word هُدًى (guidance) implied in the first sentence of verse 128 can refer either to the Qur'ān or to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and the meaning would be, "Did not the Qur'ān or the Holy Prophet ﷺ direct them i.e. the people of Makkah and tell them about the nations and the societies who were destroyed because they disobeyed the commands of Allah and turned away from the message brought to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and whose houses and lands are now occupied by them?" It is also possible that the word هُدًى (guidance) may refer to God in which case the meaning would be "Did God not direct."

فَاصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ (So endure what they say - 20:130) The people of Makkah offered various excuses to justify their rejection of the religion brought to them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and these included derogatory remarks against his person also, such as branding him as a sorcerer, a poet or even an untruthful person. The Qur'ān suggested here two

weapons to combat the torments aimed at him by the infidels of Makkah. One was to show patience and forbearance in the face of all provocation, and the other was to devote himself wholeheartedly to prayers, as the words وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ (and proclaim the purity of your Lord) suggest.

Patience and prayers are the only remedies against aggressive hostility

Everyone in this world, whether he is big or small, good or bad, has enemies and these enemies, however weak and feeble they may be, can do harm to their opponents. If they are not strong enough, they will not hesitate to stab them in the back, and failing everything else they will use abusive language which is equally hurtful. Therefore everybody has to be on his guard to protect himself from the hostile designs of his enemies. The Qur'ān has prescribed two very effective tools for use in such a situation. One is patience, forbearance and to eschew all thoughts of revenge, while the other is to occupy oneself in prayers and invocation of Allah. A person whose thoughts are full of revenge is often unable to exact it from his enemy despite his power and influence and is consumed with chagrin and frustration. On the other hand a person who devotes himself to prayers finds solace in the belief that nobody can harm him without the will of Allah and that whatever Allah wills has a hidden purpose behind it. This belief not only affords him satisfaction but also frees his mind from all thoughts of anger and revenge resulting from the hostile acts of his enemies. The words لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَى (So that you may be pleased) occurring at the end of the verse mean that "If you follow this advice, you will be able to lead a happy and contented life".

وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ (And proclaim the purity and praise of your Lord - 20:130) Here the direction of proclaiming Allah's purity is followed by the direction of proclaiming His praise. It implies an indication that when a person is given *taufīq* to remember Allah by performing *dhikr* or any other form of worship, it should not make him proud of it. Instead, he should praise Allah, because without His *taufīq* (facilitation) he could not perform that worship. Then, proclaiming the purity and praise of Allah may mean invocation of Allah and His praise, and they may also mean the prescribed prayers. The subsequent fixed times which have been mentioned obviously refer to prayer timings. Thus قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ (before the sunrise) means early morning (*fajr*) prayer قَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا (before it sets)

means midday prayers (*ẓuhr*) and afternoon prayers (*‘aṣr*) while *وَمِنْ أَنَايَ الْبَيْلِ* (and in some hours of night) means all prayers after sunset i.e. *maghrib*, *‘ishā* and *tahajjud*. The words *أَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ* (the edges of the day) are intended to put additional emphasis on Fajr and Maghrib prayers.

Worldly wealth is a fleeting thing and is not an evidence of God's favour, and for good Muslims it is a danger signal

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ (And never stretch your eyes - 20:13) The words are addressed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are intended to provide guidance to his followers. They are told not to cast covetous eyes at the splendor and glitter of those who revel in the enjoyment of worldly pleasures, because all these things are fleeting and transient while the grace and blessings bestowed upon the Holy Prophet ﷺ and through him upon his followers are everlasting and much more desirable than worldly luxuries.

People have always wondered at the wealth and prosperity of the infidels and evil doers despite their being loathsome and contemptible in the eyes of Allah, while pious and obedient Muslims spend their lives in poverty and destitution. Even the great and highly respected Sayyidnā ‘Umar al-Fārūq ؓ was made aware of this glaring disparity one day when he entered the private quarter of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and saw him lying on a mat of rough reeds which left their marks on his body. Sayyidnā ‘Umar ؓ stood there and wept. Then he said, "O Prophet of Allah! The kings of Persia and Byzantium live in comfort and luxury whereas you who are the chosen prophet of Allah and also his beloved live such a harsh life." To this the Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "O son of Khattab! Has it not dawned upon you yet that Allah has given to these people everything that is dear to them in this world, but they will have no share of the good things in the Hereafter, only punishment and pain?" This is the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ chose for himself a life which was free from the pomp and vanity of this wicked world, even though he had the means of accumulating all the comforts and luxuries of life. Whenever he received share of wealth even without physical toil or exertion, he immediately distributed it among the poor and the needy and kept nothing of it for himself. Ibn Abī Ḥātim has related, quoting Sayyidnā Abū Sa‘īd al-Khadri ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said,

ان اخوف ما اخاف عليكم ما يفتح الله لكم من زهرة الدنيا (ابن كثير)

What I fear most about you is wealth and worldly splendor which will be arrayed before you. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this Ḥadīth the Holy Prophet ﷺ has foretold the Muslims about their conquests and the acquisition of vast territories which will bring them untold wealth and means of luxury. But there is no cause to feel satisfaction at these prospects; on the other hand there is every reason to fear such an eventuality because an excess of indulgence in luxuries may make people forget their duty to Allah.

Requiring one's relatives and associates to offer their prayers regularly and the philosophy behind it

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا (And bid your family to perform *ṣalāh* and adhere to it yourself - 132) Here the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been asked to direct the members of his family to say prayers and that he himself should be very particular about his prayers. These appear to be two separate commands, i.e. one for the family and the other for himself but the fact is that for a person to be steadfast in saying prayers it is essential that his family and friends should be equally mindful of their duty in this matter. The word *ahl* used for the family is quite comprehensive and includes a person's wife, children and his associates because all of them influence the environment and are an integral part of society. After this verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ he used to go to the house of Sayyidnā 'Alī ؑ and Sayyidah Fāṭimah رضى الله عنها every morning at the time of morning prayers and call out الصَّلَاةُ الصَّلَاةُ (Come to *ṣalāh*, come to *ṣalāh*). (Qurṭubī)

It is reported that whenever Sayyidnā 'Urwah ibn Zubair ؓ saw a display of wealth, he would at once return home, call his family to prayer and recite to them this verse. Also when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn Khattāb ؓ got up for his midnight (*tahajjud*) prayers, he would awake the other members of his family and recite to them this verse. (Qurṭubī)

Allah provides easy sustenance to a person who devotes himself to prayers and to His worship

لَا تَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا (We ask no provision from you - 20:132) Allah does not demand of the people that they should provide sustenance to their families and dependants by their own power, because the responsibility for this is in His hands alone. Man is incapable of providing for himself,

and the best that he can do is to plough the land and plant seeds in it, but he has no power to germinate it or to make a tree grow out of it. The role of man in all this is to protect the tree after it has grown to maturity and then to put its yield to his personal use. And for the person who spends all his time in prayer Allah makes even this labour bearable for him (Tirmidhī). Ibn Mājah has quoted Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضي الله عنه that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said,

يقول الله تعالى: يا ابن آدم: تفرّغ لعبادتي املاً صدرك غنى واسد فقرك، وار لم تفعل ملأت صدرك شغلا ولم واسد فقرك (ابن كثير)

"Allah says: 'O son of 'Ādam! You dedicate yourself to My worship and I will fill your chest with sufficiency and free you from want. But if you do not obey my commands, I will fill your chest with anxieties and worries and will not free you from want.'" (Ibn Kathīr)

The meaning of the words لم واسد فقرك (I will not free you from want) is that such a man will always remain poor because the more wealth he acquires the more his greed will increase. And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه says that he heard the Holy Prophet ﷺ saying,

من جعل همومه همّاً واحداً همّ المعاد، كفاه الله همّ دنياه، ومن تشعبت به الهموم في احوال الدنيا لم يبال الله في أى اودية هلك "رواه ابن ماجه" (ابن كثير)

"A man who makes his concern for the Hereafter the focal point of all his efforts, Allah will take care of his concerns, but a person whose concerns are all about worldly affairs, Allah does not care in which valley he perishes."

أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِم بَيِّنَةٌ مَّا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَى (Has there not come to them the manifestation of that which was contained in the earlier scriptures? - 20:133) It means that all the old Revealed Books such as the Torah, the Injīl (Evangel) and the scriptures given to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام bear a witness to the prophethood of the last Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Is not all this sufficient evidence for those who persist in their denial of his prophethood?

فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَى (Then you will know who are people of the straight path and who has guidance - 20:135.) It means that though everybody is free to claim merit for his own ways and his own

actions, these claims are of no value, because the correct way is that only which finds favour with Allah, and on the Day of Resurrection everybody will be made aware as to who followed the path of error and who took the road to salvation.

اللَّهُمَّ اهْدِنَا لِمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَى الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِكَ وَلَا حَوْلَ
وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ وَلَا مَلْجَأَ وَلَا مُنْجَا مِنْكَ إِلَّا إِلَيْكَ

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Ṭā-Hā

Ends here.